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Russell Group Teacher Conference

Personal statements for competitive universities/courses

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In this session we will...

- Outline the function of a personal statement in the university admissions process
- Analyse some personal statements, identifying factors that might increase the chances of an applicant being awarded a place
- Share top tips in relation to personal statements
- Identify sources of support available from universities

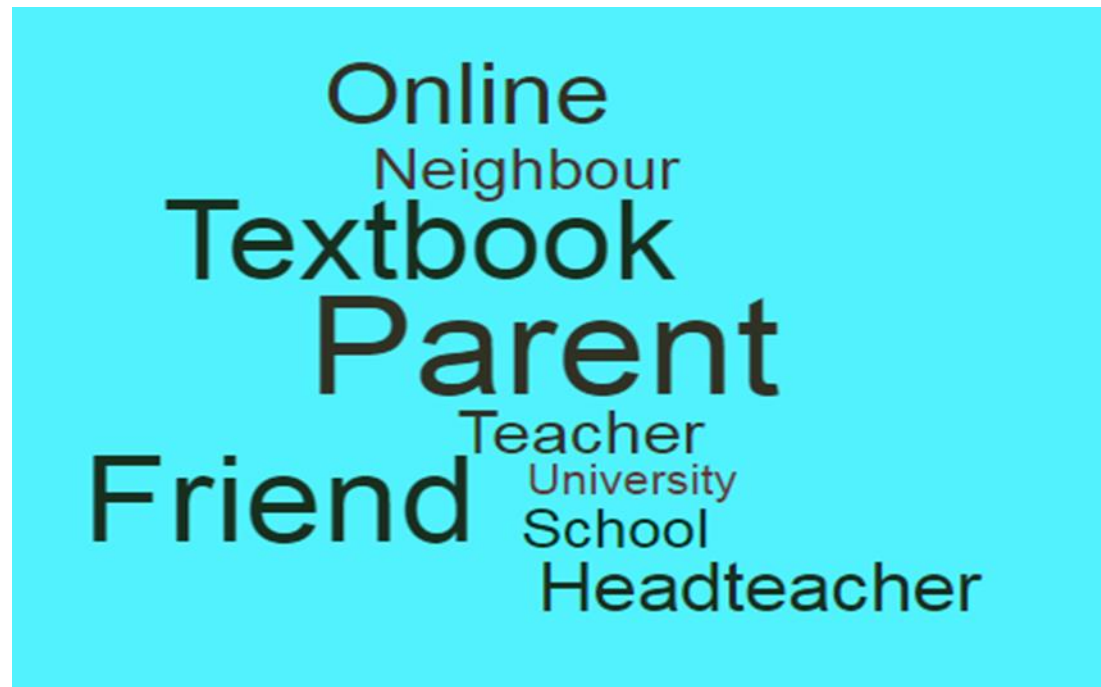


The personal statement

- Part of a wider data set used by admissions officers to make decisions e.g. predicted grades, teacher reference, interview, portfolio submission and contextual data
- *All* personal statements are read by admissions officers
- Lots of advice available, but much of it conflicting...



Sources of information...





Advice from UCAS...

‘A personal statement is what sets up an accurate portrayal of your character to universities. It’s one of the most important things you need to do, and it’s one of the things that your application relies on, but it’s not too difficult to make it perfect.’

Source: <https://www.ucas.com/connect/blogs/how-write-personal-statement>



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Exploring personal statement examples: practical task



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Universities working with schools to support progression - sample activities at UCL

- Building Blocks
- Visit UCL Days
- Sutton Scholars
- Horizons
- Young Researchers
- Explore UCL Summer School
- Access UCL
- Masterclasses
- Gateways Conferences
- Futures in Finance
- Envision @UCL
- Uni-Link
- Teacher Masterclasses
- Taster Presenters
- Parent Information Evenings
- Learners in London
- Uni-Link
- Summer Challenge
- Bring your Family to University Days
- Teacher Summer School
- Taster Days
- Realising Opportunities
- Teacher CPD Conference and more...



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Personal statements





Personal Statement

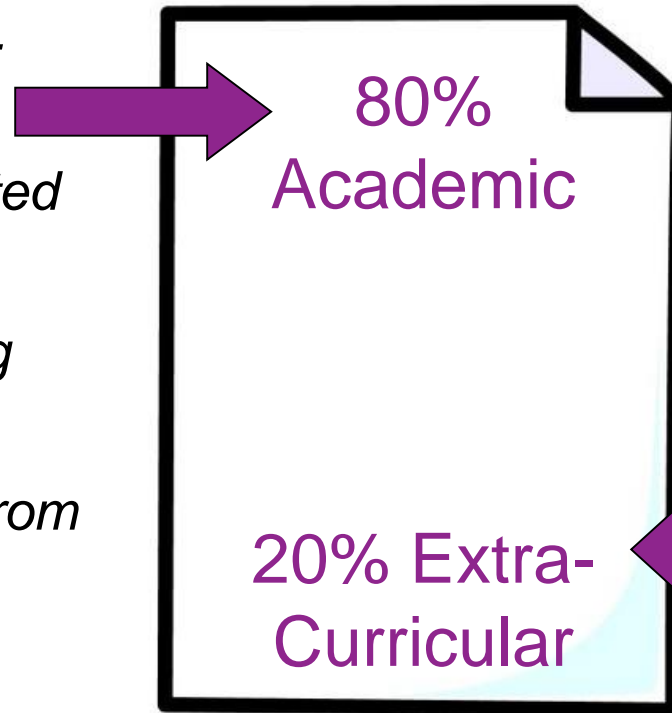
47 lines or 4,000 characters

- **A chance for the student to reflect on their chosen course – why they want to study it and why they would be good at it**
- A statement giving evidence of interests, skills and experiences
- The chance to ‘sell themselves’ to universities as a potential student of the subject



Structuring the personal statement

- *I want to study...*
- *I have read/watched/visited ...*
- *It was interesting because...*
- *What I learned from this was....*
- *What was challenging was...*



- *In my spare time I play...*
- *I had some work experience at...*
- *I enjoy...*



What is super-curricular and why is it important?

Super-curricular activities include anything a student has done that enhances their subject interest beyond their compulsory studies at school.

Super-curricular activities help to:

- Demonstrate subject interest
- Develop research skills
- Show the student can work independently and be self-motivated
- Broaden the student's subject knowledge





Super-curricular ideas: Some specific examples



iWantToStudyEngineering



Home of Big Questions



Physics. You work it out.



BBC
RADIO



92-95 FM



What about extra-curricular?

Extra curricular activities include non-academic activities, such as taking part in sport, music and volunteering.

- When we assess applicants we are first and foremost interested in their academic potential.





Advising students on personal statements

- A starting point for interview discussion
- Focus on the chosen course(s)
- ‘Why you should choose me for your course’
- Care and attention to detail
- Beware Googled quotations: ‘*I have always...*’; ‘*As Santayana once said....*’
- Make it honest!





Plagiarism

‘Ever since I accidentally burnt holes in my pyjamas after experimenting with a chemistry set on my eighth birthday, I have always had a passion for science.’

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Top tips for students

- A personal statement should be just that, personal to the applicant – so make it about YOU!
- Think carefully when using quotes and anecdotes
- Avoid unnatural use of ‘fancy’ language or humour
- Read your statement to someone else out loud and ask others to proofread
- Don’t just list things out – discuss them, be critical and analytical and make sure you can backup what you say!



Further Resources

Advancing Access

www.advancingaccess.ac.uk

University of Cambridge

www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk

UCL

www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students



Thank you for listening, any questions?

