



HEO'S 2024 **ALUMNI** GUIDE TO THE UK PERSONAL STATEMENT



FEATURES :

- Key application info & deadlines
- What makes a good personal statement
- Writing: the details to focus on
- Important reminders
- Note for those with NS

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KEY APPLICATION INFO & DEADLINES

THE APPLICATION PORTAL: UCAS

Students putting in a UK app apply via UCAS, with RI as your centre. **Refer to the UCAS application guide (available from mid-Jul) for how to create your account.** Do **not** create accounts prior, as the current cycle is still on-going.

All guides can be found on: [RI HEO webpage](#)



THE DEADLINES TO ADHERE TO

All applicants adhere to **internal RI deadlines**. These are:

- **Oxbridge/Med/Dent/Vet: 6 Oct 2024, 2359h**
- **All other apps: 23 Jan 2025, 2359h**

This is to allow your CT time for the necessary steps to support your app, which can only be done *after* you submit UCAS. HEO is unable to guarantee that any app submitted past our internal deadlines will reach the schools in time.

Refer to *Timelines* for all deadlines.



OXBRIDGE, MED & LAW APPLICANTS: ADDITIONAL TESTS

Do register for your subject-specific test (if any) **independently**. E.g., Cambridge and Imperial Nat Sci/Engg applicants will have to take the ESAT, via Pearson Vue. Law applicants have to take the LNAT, and Med applicants need to take UCAT. Refer to the Oxbridge, LNAT and UCAT websites for details of your specific test and when to take them by. **Don't miss registration!** Refer as well to our *Timelines* and UCAS guides.



WHAT MAKES A GOOD UK PERSONAL STATEMENT



PURPOSE OF THE UK STATEMENT

The UCAS statement is **academically-focused**. Your aim is to demonstrate **interest and ability** for your desired major.

Interest is shown via the **range of activities and experiences** you have taken part in, **related** to your desired major. This can be from Sec 3 to now. The more recent the better. As you have left school for a year or more, it would be good to include academic learning that you have undertaken beyond the A-levels.

Ability comes through in the **real-world awareness** you demonstrate of the subject/field of work, and in the **academic analysis** of the activities and experiences you have had.



THE NUTS & BOLTS

In UCAS, you will have just **4,000 characters (or 47 lines of text, whichever is less)** to demonstrate the above. This includes spaces.

It is approximately **80% academically focused**, and **20%** focused on **transferable skills, related to your major**.

The one statement goes to **all your choices**. Hence, it pays to choose majors across your schools which are either the exact same, or with great commonality.

For example: it's fine to have a couple of choices with Economics, and another few with Philosophy, Politics & Economics. Such a statement focuses **mainly** on Econs, whilst weaving in about Politics & Philosophy where appropriate.

It is however **not advisable** to have a range of majors: e.g., Politics & International Relations for one choice, PPE for another, Law for a third. Your statement will, in all likelihood, lack sufficient academic depth for all choices.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD UK PERSONAL STATEMENT



HOW TO DEMONSTRATE INTEREST & ABILITY?

Via a **supercurriculum**. This refers to **all activities and experiences, beyond the H2 syllabus**.

For instance, competitions, seminars, research projects you had participated in. H3s and studies undertaken beyond the regular syllabus. Independent reading done on your own, relevant activities pursued outside school, even during NS. It is **not necessary to have won medals/awards**: what matters is your **demonstrated academic understanding of what you write about, and its relevance to your major**.



THE METHOD IN WRITING

we can view this as a three-step process. For each activity:

- From a named experience/activity, highlight a **specific** concept, model or theory learnt. Or else: a key issue/tension.
- Then succinctly explain its importance/impact in the precise area (specific examples can help here)
- Finally, pull out into a larger insight: for instance, any particular limitation, or tension; broader insight or impact into the field as a whole?

Interdisciplinary majors: your writing should focus on exploring how and why your disciplines intersect: what is the nature of their relationship(s)?



SOME EXAMPLES OF WHAT SUPERCURRICULUM CAN LOOK LIKE

Specific majors: e.g., Biological Sciences: if talking about (a) an experience related to ecology/sustainability: perhaps you highlight the specific concept of adaptation. Then: (b) what is your understanding of adaptation (perhaps with a specific example) and the role it plays in species survival, and thus, (c) any larger insight into why certain species die out and not others? Or: any game-changers or other factors to explain variations in survivability?

For example: interdisciplinary majors: PPE: If explicating about the link between politics & economics: perhaps you highlighted (a) an independent reading done on your own, about political gridlock in America due to the difference in political ideology between the Democrats and Republicans. Then: (b) elucidate how this political/ideological divide has had an impact on economic decisions made by the government, and c) any further insight thus into the relationship between politics and economics?

WRITING: THE DETAILS TO FOCUS ON



HOW TO START?

It can be useful to first have a **list of activities/experiences**.

Then consider: what of this list is **relevant to your major**, in terms of **specific academic concepts, theories, models or issues** that you can pull out to write about?

For transferable skills: consider what your CCAs and other activities have taught you. If writing about these skills, be sure to **explain exactly how they are relevant to your specific major**. Avoid generalisations, for instance, “Strong communication skill is important in Law”. It’s important in just about every field!

In general, focus on developing academic depth and insight, as opposed to generalised breadth.

THE INTRO & CONCLUSION

Keep these succinct so that you save word count for the content paragraphs. Some suggestions:

As an opening, it can be useful to concisely explain why you are interested in the major, or your understanding of what the major entails. As a ending, a neat summation of your interest (if not already in the intro) or why you wish to study in the UK, or what you wish to do after you graduate, works well.

THE CONTENT PARAGRAPHS

(Refer to method in Page 4 above). Remember that the aim is to demonstrate **academic interest and ability in your desired major**.

Some guiding questions to think about, as you explicate on your learning from your activities/experiences:

What are the **specific** theoretical concepts/models, or real-world cases/issues that I have learnt, which I am interested in?

What is **my analysis** of these? For instance: why is this concept applicable, in which specific area? What makes it so important? OR perhaps: why does a model work in one context but not another? What makes the difference?

Relevance or impact thus of the specific issue/theory to other areas, or the broader field itself? Does it confirm or perhaps overturn existing assumptions? Any implication on the field or even wider society?

If looking at interdisciplinary majors (e.g., PPE): How would I characterise the relationship between these different fields?

When looking at non-acad activities: What relevant skills have I learnt, specific to my discipline?

IMPORTANT REMINDERS



TIPS ON APT, CLEAR WRITING

Given the UCAS character & line limit, it pays to be succinct.

When writing, fill in all you have to say first, with a clear focus on academic analysis. Then, work on condensing your statement if you overshoot the limit.

You'll be tempted to forfeit the space between paragraphs (yes, it counts as a line). Don't! Clear writing includes consideration for your readers.

Avoid generalisations & hyperbole. Remember that what you write is fair game for an interview question. Ensure you know what, exactly, you are writing about.

Finally, give yourself **sufficient time to work on this**. Don't expect to complete it in one sitting! Start early, especially if you are applying for Oxbridge/Med-related courses, where the **deadline for submission is 6 Oct 2359h**.



A NOTE ON AGENTS, CHATGPT & OTHER AI SOFTWARE

In line with UCAS and the UK universities, HEO **does not approve** of the use of private agents/consultancies.

Only you write your own statement.

Additionally, AI should **not** be used to write your statement. It will lack specific academic insight which only you can do, appropriate to your own understanding. **Authenticity is critical for good, personalised writing.**

Where AI can be helpful: in helping you with specific synonyms for instance, or if you are struggling with a particular line, or if you need some **ideas** for how to start/end your essay. **In all instances, exercise caution.** Avoid putting in your entire statement or even entire paragraph(s) into any ChatGPT/AI software. This is as your writing is unique to *your own experiences*.



UCAS RESOURCES ON STATEMENT WRITING

For more resources, refer here:

[UCAS Personal Statement Resource](#)

[UCAS: Do's and don'ts on using ChatGPT/AI](#)

NOTES FOR THOSE WITH NS

STATE PRECISELY IN UCAS WHEN YOU CAN ENTER UNIVERSITY

For those in 1st year of NS: indicate for a 1-year gap accordingly. Refer to our UCAS guide (available mid-Jul) for how to do this. **Be careful prior to submission that this is stated explicitly.**



THE MAJORS AND UNIVERSITY THAT DO NOT DEFER TWO YEARS

In general, the majors of **Mathematics** and **Medicine** do **not** defer for two years.

LSE also does not defer for two years.

Check carefully on each university's website for most updated details. Also check when, exactly, you finish NS, so that you know your own start date. In general, terms begin in Aug-Sep of each year for UK universities.



INTERVIEW AVAILABILITY

Oxbridge colleges commonly hold their interviews in early-mid Dec. If shortlisted, respond to your college's email about interview details quickly, especially if you are unavailable on some dates. Usually, you will receive an email in Oct-Nov, after UCAS submission. For other colleges that interview (e.g., some majors in Imperial, the major of Medicine): commonly this will be from Jan-Mar of the following year.



All the best in writing!