

UK personal statement guide for alumni 2023

The RI200 special mythology edition. 😊

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Higher Education Office

Raffles Institution 2023





Expectations

- All UK applicants apply via RI. It's a good idea to approach your CT personally before putting in your UCAS request, as a matter of courtesy.
- Applicants are to refer to *Timelines 2022/2023* for relevant deadlines. **Adhere to all internal RI deadlines please.** This allows your CTs time to complete UCAS for you.
- Do **not** create your UCAS accounts at this stage. You only do so from Jul onwards, when we publish the UCAS guide.
- We will make available **written feedback submission** for alumni who wish for HEO guidance on their personal statements. Look out in Jul for instructions on this.

Key points to note

- UCAS has a maximum stipulation of **five** choices for college/course. **Four** if you are looking at Medicine.
- You can only write **one** personal statement; so avoid reference to any specific university. The limit is 4000 characters or 47 lines of text, spaces included.
- The UCAS courses you select should have commonality for your statement to work. Avoid selecting different fields.
- In your statement, **focus mainly on academic activities**, as a demonstration of your passion, ability and understanding of the course(s) you are applying to.
- **All work must be original and the applicant's own.**
- **Note for those in their 1st year of NS:** Please check the university websites for most up-to-date information, on whether they hold your place for 2 years. This pertains particularly to Medicine and Mathematics courses. Universities also update their deferral policies year on year.





The focus of a good statement

- The UCAS statement is focused on demonstrating **academic** aptitude and understanding of your desired major, via the **relevant** activities and experiences that you have pursued.
- As you have been out of school for 1-2 years, it's important to demonstrate learning did not stop. In the time between JC and now, what **else** did you learn, and how much **further and deeper** did you go, in academic work?
- This could be in the form of independent readings, courses taken, or lessons gleaned in your work experience, for instance.
- Non-academic pursuits may be included if they are relevant to your course of study. Consider adhering to the 80-20 principle: 80% or more for academic coverage, 20% for transferable skills. It's fine if your academic focus is more than 80%.
- If you have applied previously, it's useful to refine your statement with added insight and new learning.

Overview: crafting a good statement

- Start by curating a list of experiences & activities, related to your desired major.
- Consider: what academic insights did you learn, which are beyond the H2 syllabus?
- Don't be afraid to go in depth of analysis. This is preferred to broad impressions, sweeping references to a range of activities, or laundry listing of awards. These may not show actual intellectual ability.
- If discussing transferable skills, be sure to contextualise for specific relevance to your major. Leave out detail that is not relevant.





The introduction & conclusion

- Keep these short to save character count for the content paragraphs, as the bulk of academic analysis will be shown there.
- For a nifty introduction and conclusion, consider one or more of the following ideas:
 - ✓ What sparked my interest in this field of study?
 - ✓ If I had to capture my understanding of the discipline in one line, what would it be?
 - ✓ Why do I want to pursue it in university?
 - ✓ Why in the U.K?

Some guiding questions for content paragraphs

- What specific theoretical concepts/models or real-world cases have I learnt, that intrigue me? Why?
- What is **my** analysis of these theories or issues?
- Relevance or impact of the specific issue/theory discussed to the field? Any broader insight into the discipline, or impact on wider society?
- What are some essential tensions or limitations in the field, revealed by my analysis?
- If looking at interdisciplinary majors (e.g., PPE): How would I characterise the **exact** relationship between these different fields?
- When looking at non-academic activities: What relevant skills have I learnt from these, **specific** to my discipline?

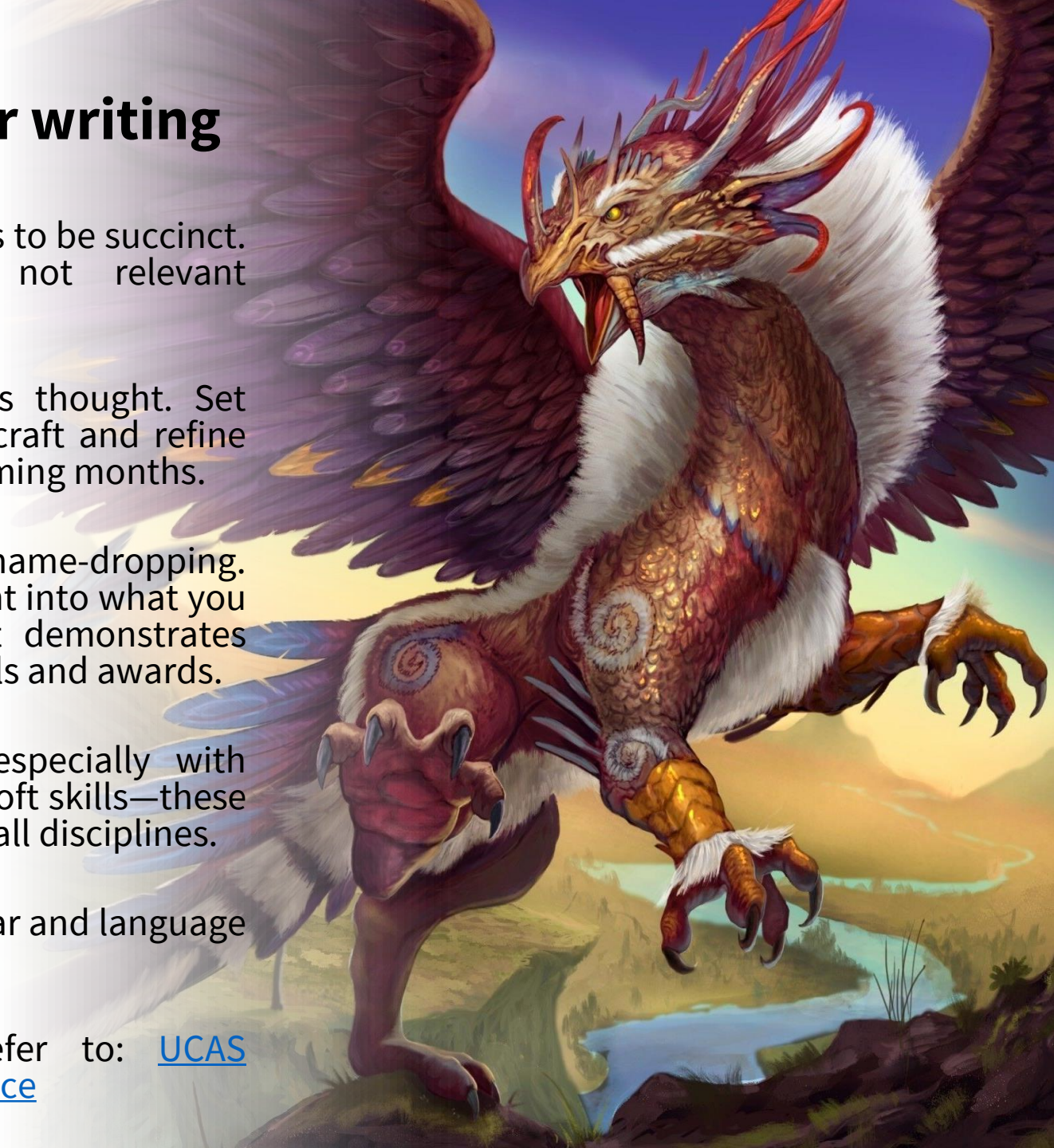
Tip: If you have applied previously, it's a good idea to update and refine your work, especially if there have been new developments in the field.



Tips on apt, clear writing

- Given UCAS limits, it pays to be succinct. Leave out what is not relevant academically.
- A good statement takes thought. Set aside sufficient time to craft and refine your work, across the coming months.
- Avoid laundry-listing or name-dropping. It is your academic insight into what you studied in process that demonstrates ability, rather than medals and awards.
- Avoid generalisations, especially with regards to the utility of soft skills—these are applicable to almost all disciplines.
- Double-check all grammar and language before you submit!

For more resources, refer to: [UCAS personal statement guidance](#)





Picture sources as credited:

[Gryphon 1](#)

[Gryphons 2 and 3](#)

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The End

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