

For Alumni: A Short 2022 Guide to the UK Personal Statement



Step 1: The key considerations

When you apply to UK universities, you will do so via UCAS. This has a maximum stipulation of **five** application 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 or college. There is a limit of 4000 characters or 47 lines of text, spaces included. Paragraphing should be kept, in order for your statement to be reader-friendly.

Be very familiar with the description of the intended course(s) of study. The courses you select should be similar across schools, for your statement to work.

In your statement, **focus mainly on academic activities**, as a demonstration of your passion for, ability in and understanding of the course(s) you are applying to.

You may include your non-academic pursuits if they are relevant to your course of study. Consider adhering to the 80-20 principle: 80% or more for academic coverage, 20% relevant non-academic attributes. It's fine if your academic focus is more than 80%.

Note for boys 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.



Step 2: Reflect on your **academic experiences**

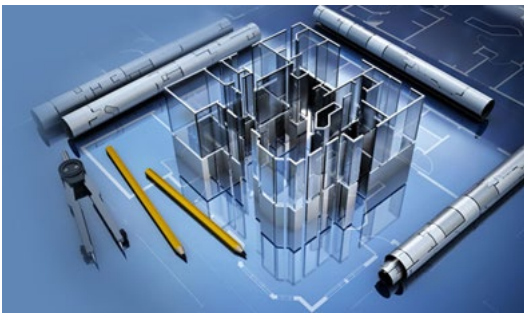
Your experiences should not just be limited to what you did in school. You should continue to demonstrate academic aptitude in the activities pursued post A-levels. This could be in the form of independent readings, courses taken, or in your work experience, for instance.

Your aptitude is demonstrated not just in listing what you have done, but in your independent analysis, academic insight and opinions about what you have studied. For instance, how is a theoretical model

applicable to the real world? How may a theory be limited in real life, and why so? How does an application have impact on the field, which particular niche, and with what potential? Comparative analysis is also possible, particularly for humanities subjects.

Aptitude is also shown in your real-world awareness about the skills needed to pursue your major. In light of this, relevant soft skills related to your major could have been learnt in non-academic activities: if writing about them, be able to explain why these skills are important in the pursuit of your major/field.

Key question to ask yourself: From your time in school to now, how did you stretch yourself academically in your desired major(s), beyond the A-levels? The focus should be on what you have done and learnt **beyond** the H2 curriculum, be it pursued independently and informally, or otherwise. If you have applied in a previous year, there should be material difference between this and last year's statement.



Step 3: Drafting your statement

From your reflections, select relevant information and insights for your statement.

For your introduction, the following may be useful:

In a succinct sentence, how would I define this major?

What sparked my interest in this field?

Why do I want to pursue it in university?

You are of course free to begin in any way that naturally flows for yourself. The main thing is, keep it succinct, so you have words for the content paragraphs. 😊

For each content paragraph:

Focus on actual activities, done within and beyond school, which demonstrate academic ability and aptitude to pursue your chosen course. Tip: as you are applying as an alumni, you will want to show clearly that you have continued pursuing your interests, even beyond the A-levels. Particularly as restrictions have been lifted this year, what new academically-related activities have you pursued?

What relevant academic insights did you learn from all that has been accomplished? Refer to the preceding section for what academic insights mean. Have you demonstrated this in clear, succinct writing? Avoid overelaboration and repetition.

For non-academic activities: Have you explained why the skills learnt are transferable to your major? (This is the 20%; only if relevant).

Tip: Typically, 3 to 4 content paragraphs suffice, with each demonstrating clear academic insights which are relevant to your chosen major. More isn't always merrier.

End off with a simple conclusion, possibly reflecting on your aspirations/plans upon completing your degree or the UK experience you look forward to.



Step 4: Refining your essay

The key questions to guide you here:

Through my range of activities, have I demonstrated relevant aptitude for the course(s) I am interested in?

Did I cite specific examples and show understanding of the field?

Have I demonstrated that my academic pursuits did not stop with the A-levels, but went beyond?

You will want to be as concise and succinct as possible: avoid repetition and belabouring points.

Do's and Don'ts

Do's	Don'ts
Write your statement on your own.	Exaggerate, generalise or laundry-list.
Write clearly and ensure there are no grammatical mistakes.	Cram your statement with irrelevant information.
Start early in planning & drafting.	Leave it to the last minute. A serious application is never done on last-minute impulse, as much time is needed for proper writing.

For additional reading:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/how-write-ucas-undergraduate-personal-statement>

Important notes:

- HEO will be publishing the *Timelines 2022/2023 guide* by early Jun 2022. Look out for this as it will spell out clearly the deadlines to pay attention to.
- The UCAS guide will be published by mid-Jul 2022, follow through then how to set up your account.
- **Adhere to all internal RI deadlines for UCAS applications.** This is important as your teachers can only do their parts for you *after* you are done. So give your teachers time to do the necessary for you: remember that teachers have many to write for.
- It would be considerate to approach your CTs personally before requesting for a recommendation on UCAS. A good time to do so would be in Jul-Aug, before you set up your account.
- We will make available **written feedback submission** for alumni who wish to get HEO feedback on their personal statements. Look out in Jul for instructions on how this can be done.

All the best! 😊

Your teacher-counsellors @HEO