Personal Statement

A student's personal statement is a **crucial part** of the application process and will be used in its current format for the 2025 entry. (There are likely to be changes to the personal statement format for the 2026 entry.)

A personal statement should:

• Be 4,000 characters or 47 lines of text (including spaces) – whichever comes first
• Portray the applicant's **character**, **knowledge**, **experience**, and **ambition**

The personal statement should **show**:

⁻ Why students are **applying** for the course?
⁻ What do students **know** about the subject and which aspects particularly **interest** them?
⁻ What personal **qualities**, **skills** and **experience** will help students in this subject and how did they **acquire** these?
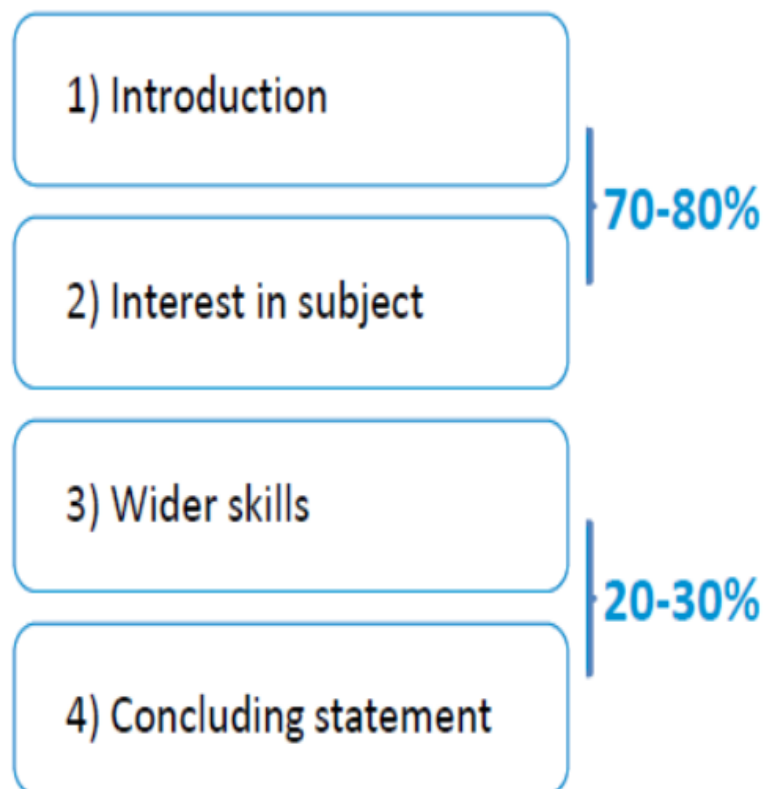
Personal statement structure

There is no 'definitive' **correct answer** as to how the personal statement should be structured, but the division given below is a very useful guide:

What to include

The bulk of the statement should be **academic** in its focus

1) Introduction

2) Interest in subject

70-80%

3) Wider skills

4) Concluding statement

20-30%

Top personal statement tips

- A personal statement should give an insight into a student's **motivations and interests**
- Check **spelling and grammar**
- Ensure everything in the personal statement is **relevant** to the application
- Students should express themselves, **avoiding clichés and quotes** from other people
- All the information students include should be **supported by evidence**
- Students should reflect on their **experience and skills** within the statement
- The personal statement should be **unique to the student**, admissions staff want to hear about the **individual student**
- Students should **avoid jokes**
- Students should **tell the truth**. This is a formal application and will form part of the student's contract with the university
- Students should be **positive**
- Students must not copy other people's personal statements **UCAS use plagiarism software** to detect this

A personal statement example

The paragraph below, although not perfect is from a personal statement of a **high standard**. The student has not just *described* what they have read but has shown *critical analysis*. **Critical analysis** is crucial when applying for top universities including **Russell Group** universities and competitive courses.

In my spare time I have enjoyed reading philosophy books which have taken me beyond the A Level syllabus. I read an ancient text called "Discourses" by Epictetus. I struggled with this a little at first, but once I found an updated translation of the original text by Robert Dobbin I was able to fully comprehend Epictetus's ideas. In the book, Epictetus observes that when human beings suffer it is not because bad things have happened to them. Rather, they suffer because of their interpretation of these events and their internal narrative which tells them that these events are bad and ought not to have happened. This observation led me to develop a more general interest in the philosophy of Stoicism, which Epictetus espouses. My philosophy teacher then recommended that I read a book called "A Guide to Rational Living" by the psychologist Albert Ellis. In this book Ellis explains how he managed to use Epictetus's ancient advice to improve the quality of the psychotherapy he was offering to his patients. By using these ancient Stoic principles, Ellis was able to make his patients feel less depressed about their lives. The final book I have read on the topics of Stoicism is "A Guide to the Good Life" by William B Irvine. This has shown me how I can use Stoic principles every day to improve my own life, such as imagining that my life is less successful than it actually is to enable me to realise how fortunate I am. Now that I have developed a particular interest in Stoicism I hope to write a dissertation on this subject at university.

The three links below provide further insights into how to compose a personal statement of high quality:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIQxXKEjh9I

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZtuJLwP_vM

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVQ53PWyxFo