


WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

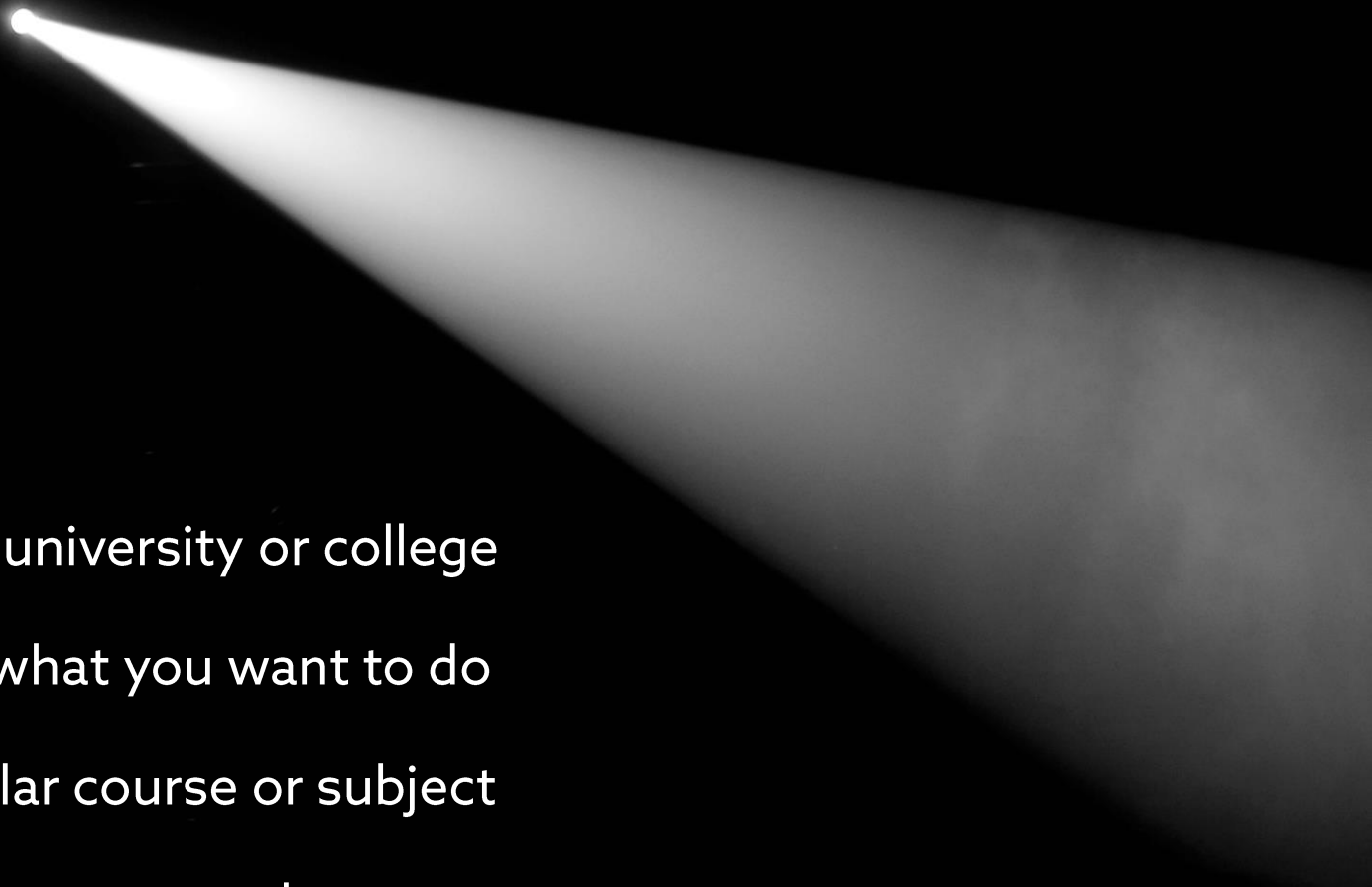


**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE



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- **WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT?**
 - **WHY DO I NEED TO WRITE ONE?**
 - **WHAT ARE ADMISSIONS LOOKING FOR?**
 - **HOW DO I START?**
 - **EXAMPLE STRUCTURE**
 - **DOs AND DON'Ts**
 - **TOP TIPS**

WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT?

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- ↘ Supports your application to study at a university or college
 - ↘ Evidence that you have thought about what you want to do
 - ↘ Shows why you'd like to study a particular course or subject
 - ↘ Demonstrates skills and experience you possess, shows your passion for your chosen field

WHY DO I NEED TO WRITE ONE?

- ↓ Most courses in the UK do not require interviews – only opportunity to speak to person making admissions decisions
- ↓ Provide evidence of work experience and additional activities to support application
- ↓ Poor personal statement can weaken an otherwise strong application
- ↓ Can also be used to consider 'near miss' applications



KEEP IT GENERAL.

- ↘ You only write one personal statement – it is the same for each course you apply for
- ↘ Avoid mentioning universities or colleges by name
- ↘ If you've chosen similar subjects, talk about the subject in general, and try not to mention courses titles
- ↘ If you've chosen a variety of subjects, just write about common themes, like problem solving or creativity



WHAT ARE ADMISSIONS LOOKING FOR?

- ↘ Skills and aspects that cannot be learned from other parts of your application (team work, social skills, work experience, etc.)
- ↘ Your **academic abilities** – will you be academically capable of the course?
- ↘ Your **interests and enthusiasm** – will you be motivated to study?
- ↘ Your **experiences** – have you got relevant skills to, and familiarity with, the subject?
- ↘ Your **personal skills** – are you going to be a good, capable student?



WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE?



- Tell the reader **why** you're applying – your ambitions, what interests you about the subject/course provider/higher education in general
- Explain what makes you suitable – relevant experience, skills, or achievements you've gained from education, work, or other activities
- As an **international** applicant, you may also want to mention:
 - why you want to study in the UK
 - your English language skills, and any English courses or tests you've taken
 - why you want to be an international student, rather than study in your home country

HOW SHOULD I START?

GET YOUR IDEAS ON PAPER:

- Take two minutes to jot down five ideas:
skills/experience/hobbies/interests/achievements
- Use proactive, positive words and give clear examples
- Make a mind map



HOW SHOULD I START? (continued)

My **motivation** to study the course:

- Qualifications
- Suitability
- Interests
- Talent

My **work experience**:

- Jobs
- Voluntary work
- Why did you do these
- What did you learn
- Does it relate directly or are they transferrable skills?



**WHY SHOULD A
UNIVERSITY
OFFER ME A
PLACE?**


My **future plans**:

- What would you like to do after the course?
- Career plans
- Goals

My **skills and achievements**:

- Extracurricular activities
- Responsibilities
- What makes you unique
- Hobbies and interests

HOW SHOULD I WRITE MY PERSONAL STATEMENT?

- ↘ No definite format for you to follow
 - ↘ Remember: your personal statement needs to be 'personal'
 - ↘ Enthusiastic, concise, and natural style – nothing too complex
 - ↘ Structure your info to reflect the skills and qualities the unis and colleges value most – use the course descriptions to help you
 - ↘ Don't include details that are already included elsewhere in your UCAS application (e.g. your grades)
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EXAMPLE OF STRUCTURE.

Paragraph 1: Introduction

- Where does your interest come from for that subject?
- What was it that set you on your path/what was your personal trigger?
- Name drop, mention authors you have read, and current events that are going on, that might relate to your subject
- Only 2-3 examples (limited by word count)

Paragraph 2: Your interest in the subject

- What have you done in school to develop your interest in that subject?
- What have you done outside of school that you can link to the subject?
- Do you have career aspirations for a particular line of work?

EXAMPLE OF STRUCTURE. (continued)

Paragraph 3: Your wider skills

- Your non-academic achievements
- Paid employment, volunteering, travel, hobbies, etc.
- Consider: What did you learn? Does it relate to your subject in some way? Is it recent? What transferrable skills did you learn? Can they be useful in university/in your future?

Paragraph 4: Summary and conclusion

- One or two lines
- Recap what you mentioned, think of how to bring it all together
- Show why you wish to be considered for the course and why you would succeed on it

A GOOD PERSONAL STATEMENT SHOULD...

- ↘ Open with a short introduction and end with a short conclusion
- ↘ Leave the reader with a strong, positive and lasting impression
- ↘ Make your application stand out and give you an edge over other applicants

Structure is **key**. Consider the **ABC** method:

Activity – what did you do?

Benefit – what skills did you gain?

Course – how did it prepare you for the course?

DO...

- ↘ Show you know your strengths, and outline your ideas clearly
- ↘ Be enthusiastic
- ↘ Try to stand out, but be careful with humour, quotes, or anything unusual
- ↘ Proofread!
- ↘ Check the character and line limit – you have 4,000 characters and 47 lines
- ↘ Give yourself plenty of time
- ↘ Expect to produce several drafts of your personal statement before being totally happy with it
- ↘ Do ask people you trust for their feedback



BE PROFESSIONAL.

Liam_turns_me_on@

applicant's name was Liam

Serial_killer@

applicant applied for Nursing

murderman2003@

applicant applied for Social Work

Stalker-at-work@

applicant applied for Law

Thongsonawashingline@

just no.

DON'T...

- ↘ List your personal weaknesses
- ↘ Make spelling mistakes
- ↘ Repeat yourself
- ↘ Use poor grammar
- ↘ Waffle on about irrelevant things
- ↘ Use rude language
- ↘ Lie about your life or experiences, or exaggerate
- ↘ Use abbreviations
- ↘ Use smileys
- ↘ Rely on spellcheck
- ↘ Plagiarise

TOP 10 MOST COMMON OPENING SENTENCES.

1. **From a young age I have (always) been [interested in/fascinated by]** (Used by 1,779 applicants)
2. **For as long as I can remember I have...** (Used by 1,451 applicants)
3. **I am applying for this course because...** (Used by 1,370 applicants)
4. **I have always been interested in...** (Used by 927 applicants)
5. **Throughout my life I have always enjoyed...** (Used by 310 applicants)
6. **Reflecting on my educational experiences...** (Used by 257 applicants)
7. **Nursing is a very challenging and demanding [career/profession/course]...** (Used by 211 applicants)
8. **Academically, I have always been...** (Used by 168 applicants)
- 9/10. **I have always wanted to pursue a career in... (Used by 160 applicants) / I have always been passionate about... (Used by 160 applicants)**
11. **Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world... (Used by 148 applicants)**

TO RECAP...



- ↘ Write a plan
- ↘ Make it individually unique to you
- ↘ Be direct and straight to the point
- ↘ Don't undermine your achievements
- ↘ Don't rush
- ↘ Check it

USEFUL RESOURCES.



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- ↘ Northumbria's advice: <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/guides/writing-your-personal-statement/>
- ↘ Tips from a current Northumbria student: <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/the-hub/entries/2018/11/writing-your-personal-statement/>
- ↘ UCAS guide: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/how-write-ucas-undergraduate-personal-statement>
- ↘ Study in the UK guide: <https://www.studyin-uk.com/uk-study-info/personal-statement/>
- ↘ QS guide: <https://www.topuniversities.com/blog/10-tips-writing-personal-statement-university-applications>



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BEST OF LUCK!

WE ARE HERE TO HELP. GET IN TOUCH:

Scan the QR code to book an informal meeting with
Northumbria's International Officer or email:

lina.sernaite@northumbria.ac.uk



#TakeOnTomorrow
www.northumbria.ac.uk