UCAS

Personal Statements

- For UCAS personal statement 2026 entry, applicants will no longer submit a single, extended essay. Instead, you'll answer three unique questions.

- This change was implemented to give students a more precise structure to follow and to ensure that universities can better assess your motivations, skills, and experiences in a focused way.

- How To Write Your Undergraduate Personal Statement | UCAS

- "Try to include something unique and memorable about yourself. Admission teams receive thousands of applications each day, so give them a reason to read yours more than once."

- The UCAS personal statement has now been broken down into **three separate questions**, each focusing on a specific area of your application.
- Each answer has a minimum character count of **350** characters, and the overall character limit remains at **4,000** characters (including spaces).
- The questions will help you stay focused and ensure you cover the most important points universities want to see.
- The new UCAS personal statement layout breaks down the personal statement into more manageable sections, aiming to reduce the stress of writing while giving you a chance to clearly demonstrate your suitability for your chosen course.

Question 1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?

- This question gives you the chance to express your passion and motivation for your chosen subject. It's important to demonstrate that you've thought deeply about your decision and that you are truly interested in the field you want to pursue.

Here's what you should include:

- **Your motivations:** Why did you choose this course? Did a specific experience, book, or person inspire you? Universities want to see your enthusiasm for the subject, so be authentic and show your passion.

- **Your understanding of the subject area:** Talk about any super-curricular activities you've engaged in (activities outside the classroom that have contributed to your knowledge, like reading academic journals, attending lectures, or participating in online courses).

- **Your future goals:** Even if you're not sure what career you want, think about how this course will help you develop the skills necessary for your future ambitions.

How to open your personal statement

- Admissions Tutors will be reading a lot of personal statements so it's important to grab their attention right from the start.

- Remember, it can only be 4,000 characters, which is about two sides of A4. So, you'll need to use your words wisely to fit everything in.

- You can find a full guide on **How to start a personal statement: the attention grabber**, but **here are the main things to think about**.

- Don't overthink the opening. Just start by showing your enthusiasm for the subject, showcasing your knowledge and understanding, and sharing your ambitions of what you want to achieve.

- Avoid cliches! Remember, this opening part is simply about introducing yourself, so let the admissions tutor reading your personal statement get to know you.

- Keep it relevant and simple. You're limited on how much you can include so avoid long-winded explanations. Why use 20 words when 10 can make your point?

Example

- **Example:**
- If you're applying for a Nursing course, you might explain how volunteering at a hospital ignited your passion for healthcare and how the course will equip you with the clinical skills needed to make a difference in patient care.

Question 2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you prepare for this course?

- This question focuses on how your academic background has prepared you for the subject. It's your chance to show how your studies so far are directly relevant to your chosen course

Here's what you should include:

- **Your relevant qualifications:** Think about the subjects you've studied that have given you the foundational knowledge for your course. Whether it's a specific module in school or college, or an online course you've completed, mention anything that relates directly to your field of study.

- **Transferable skills:** Don't just talk about what you've learned in the classroom. Universities also want to see the skills you've gained that will help you succeed at university, such as analytical thinking, problem-solving, or research skills.

- **Any notable academic achievements:** If you've won an award, received a certificate, or achieved something significant in your studies, mention this here.

- Include positions of responsibility you hold, or have held, both in and out of school.

Example

- **Example:**
- For a Business degree, you might explain how studying Economics and Mathematics in school has helped you develop strong analytical skills, or how completing a management project as part of your Higher helped you gain practical experience in leadership.

Question 3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

- In this section, you get to talk about anything you've done outside of your formal education that shows you're ready for university. This could include work experience, volunteering, or any other activities that have helped you build skills relevant to your course.

Here's what you should include:

- **Work experience or volunteering:** Have you worked or volunteered in a role that gave you hands-on experience in your chosen field? Explain how these experiences helped you develop important skills, like communication, teamwork, or time management. Skills from paid work/part time jobs can also be included.

- **Personal life experiences:** Think about any personal challenges or responsibilities you've taken that have helped you grow. For example, caring for a family member may have developed your resilience, empathy, and organisational skills.

- **Hobbies and extracurricular activities:** Did you participate in any clubs or sports that helped you build important skills? Maybe you volunteered at a summer school or attended extra-curricular workshops to enhance your knowledge.

- **Post-education activities (for applicants not currently in school):** If you're applying after taking a gap year or working, explain how your activities during this time have prepared you for university.

Example:

- If you're applying for a Psychology course, you could talk about your work experience at a mental health charity, where you gained insight into mental health issues and developed valuable communication and empathy skills.

How to end your personal statement

- It's always good to connect the beginning of your statement to the end and a great way to reinforce what you said at the start.

- **You want to see the ending as your chance to finish in a way that'll make the admissions tutor remember you.**

- This final part of your personal statement should emphasise the great points you've already made and answer the question of why you should be offered a place on the course.

- Read our full guide on **How to finish your statement the right way.**

What makes this a good UCAS personal statement

- **Clear passion and motivation**: The statement begins by effectively showcasing a genuine passion for the field of nursing. The applicant clearly articulates why they are drawn to healthcare, with a personal example of volunteering at a care home. This provides depth and shows a true understanding of the profession.

- **Balanced content across questions**: Each of the three questions is answered with equal focus and attention to detail, staying within the character limits while providing meaningful content. The first question explores the applicant's motivations, the second details their academic qualifications and relevant skills, and the third highlights practical experience gained outside of formal education.

- **Relevant academic background**: The applicant highlights subjects like Biology, Chemistry, Psychology, and Health and Social Care, which directly relate to the study of nursing. This gives the admissions team confidence in their academic preparedness for the course.

- Remember do not list what you have done but show them what skills etc you have got out of you achievements.

- **Strong evidence of real-world experience**: The personal statement includes solid evidence of real-world experience, such as volunteering at a care home, shadowing a nurse, and taking additional online courses. These examples show initiative, practical skills, and a genuine commitment to the nursing field.

- **Well-rounded approach**: The statement demonstrates not only academic readiness but also the compassionate qualities necessary for a career in nursing. This includes patience, communication, teamwork, and leadership skills, all essential for professional success. **Stays within character limits**: The statement stays within the UCAS character limits (including spaces) for each question while ensuring enough content is provided. This balance ensures the statement is both concise and comprehensive, making it easy for admissions officers to review.

Is using AI to help with my personal statement 'cheating'?

- As you can imagine, we have had a lot of questions from people applying for university or college about whether using tools like ChatGPT to help with your UCAS personal statement is considered 'cheating'.

- Generating (and then copying, pasting and submitting) all or a large part of your personal statement from an AI tool such as ChatGPT, and presenting it as your own words, **could be considered cheating by universities and colleges** and could affect your chances of an offer.

- When you complete your application, you now have to declare that your personal statement hasn't been copied or provided from another source, including artificial intelligence software.

- As part of our responsibility to applicants and universities and colleges, the UCAS Verification Team run checks to detect fraudulent applications and patterns of similarity in personal statements. Read our **guide to fraud and verification and similarity**.

- If UCAS software detects elements of a personal statement that are similar to others, the universities or colleges it is intended for may be notified.

Tips for using AI and ChatGPT with your personal statement

- Although using AI and ChatGPT to write your personal statement for you could be considered cheating, there are ways you could use AI to help you make a start, structure, and then check your final work.

- It's important to remember that while ChatGPT can generate text, it's not a substitute for your own thoughts and experiences. It's called a personal statement for a reason and universities want to hear from you, not an AI bot.

- You could use ChatGPT as a tool to help inspire, clarify and articulate your own ideas, rather than asking it to write your entire personal statement for you.

Here are a few ways you could use AI to assist you:

- **Brainstorm some ideas**
- You could use ChatGPT to give you ideas about topics that are relevant to your chosen subject, which you can then relate to your own experiences and opinions. Or you could ask it to list skills that are relevant to the course you're applying for, allowing you to think about your own talents and how to convey them.
- **Help with structure**
- You may want to ask ChatGPT to suggest ways of structuring your personal statement answers, ensuring that you're evidencing your skills in a clear way. Our **personal statement builder** does something very similar.
- **Use it for checking readability**
- ChatGPT can be used to check your personal statement draft for readability. It may suggest ways to rephrase sentences to make them more concise, while maintaining their meaning.

Don't be tempted to copy or share your statement

- UCAS scans all personal statements through a similarity detection system to compare them with previous statements.
- Any similarity greater than 30% will be flagged and we'll inform the universities and colleges to which you have applied.

Head of House

- Please give your Head of House drafts to mark.
- Final copy is due before the October break – Monday 13th October
- This allows us time to write your supporting statement