

# Preparing to write your personal statement

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**V**ision



**I**mpact



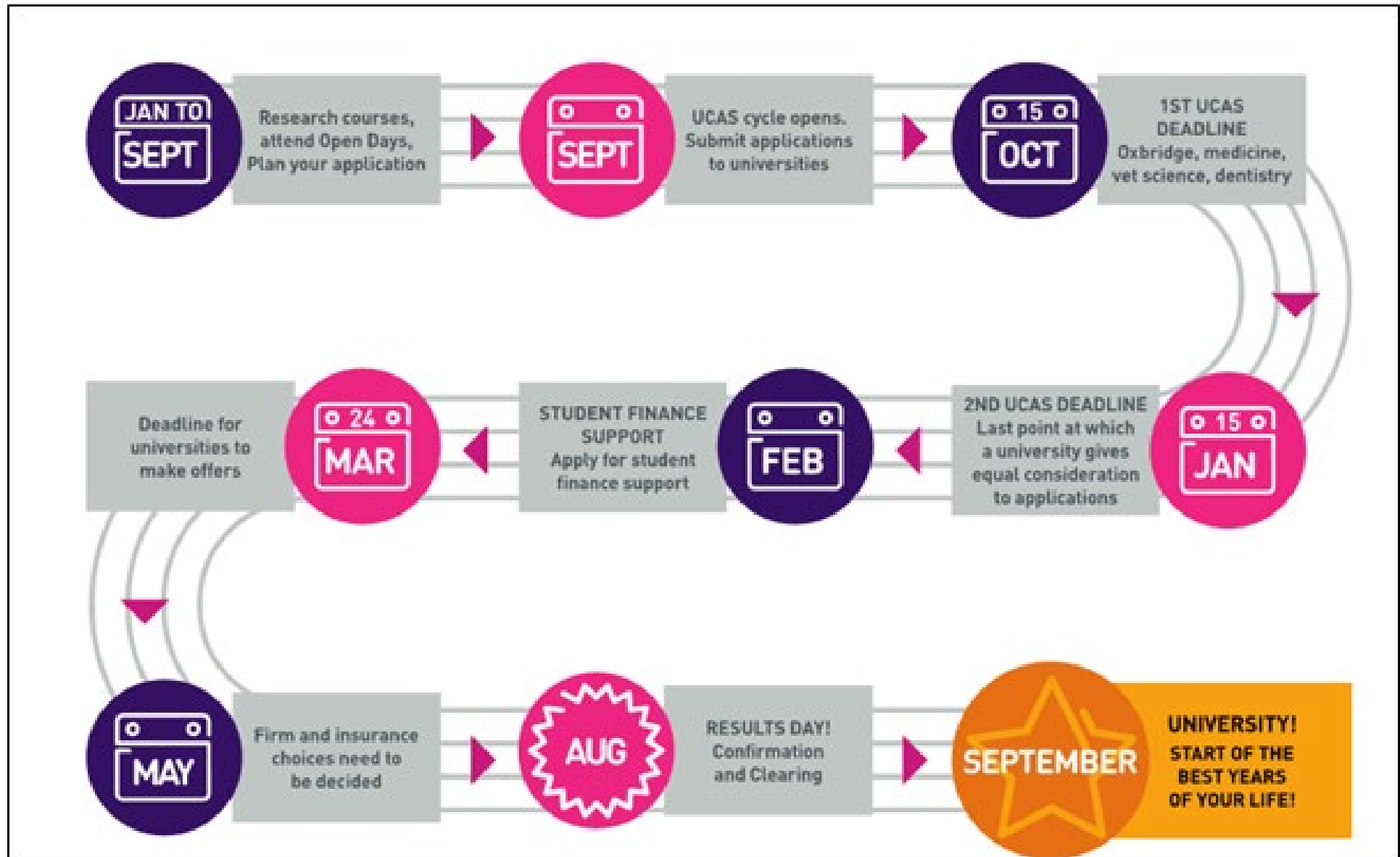
**H**abits



**G**rowth



**S**ervice



# What's the purpose?

It's your  
chance to:

- **show** your curiosity, knowledge and passion.
- **evidence** relevant skills and your potential.
- **communicate** your genuine interest and a desire to learn more.

Question prompts  
are there to help you  
but remember to:

- **link** your academic, extra-curricular and other experiences to your chosen area(s) of study.
- use relevant **examples** throughout your personal statement.

Don't panic about  
the sections:

- the important thing is to **explain** why you're including the example.
- reflect on what you've **learned** from it.
- the statement will still be reviewed as one piece.

Remember there's no right or wrong!



# Format and structure



Three sections with question prompts



4,000 - total character count split across sections



Minimum character count 350 characters per section



Don't waste characters listing grades and subjects



Don't repeat information across sections



We recommend an **80/20** split: 80% academic experience, super-curricular and work experience, and 20% related hobbies or other extra-curricular.



# What are the questions?



“ Why do you want to study this course or subject? ”



“ How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject? ”



“ What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful? ”



# Q1: why do you want to study this course or subject?

You'll want to show **evidence** of passion, curiosity and interest, this might include:

## Motivations for studying this course(s):

- Have you been inspired by a key role model or moment in your life?
- Is it a subject you love and want to pursue further?
- What is your drive?
- How has your path led you to this course or subject area?

## Knowledge of this subject area and interests:

- Is there a particular subject area you've researched?
- Something you can't wait to learn more about?
- What about a book or subject expert doing great things that's sparked your interest?

## Future plans; demonstrate why this course/subject is a good fit:

- Do you already have a particular profession in mind?
- How might you use your studies to launch your career?
- What's important to you and your future, and how might the knowledge gained from this course(s) help you achieve this?

**Remember** these are just some examples, you don't need to include it all. The key is to research the course(s) to find out what might be most relevant.



## Q2: How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

Focus on what's most **recent** and **relevant** to your subject or course(s), examples could include:

### How your studies or training relate to chosen course(s) or subject area:

- This could be your current or previous studies.
- This could be from any form of formal education – think school, college, training, or short online courses.

### What relevant or transferable skills have you got that make you a great candidate:

- Are there a couple of subjects that helped you develop a core set of relevant skills required for your chosen course(s).
- Maybe a particular module or project helped you understand where your interests and strengths lie.

### Any relevant educational achievements

- Universities and colleges will see your grades on your application - don't waste space talking about these.
- Focus on your other accomplishments like a competition, holding a position of responsibility or representing the school/college.

**Remember** these are just some examples, you don't need to include it all. The key is to research the course(s) to find out what might be most relevant.



# Q3: What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

Examples should be **reflective** and **demonstrate** further **suitability** for your subject or course(s), this could include:

| Work experience, employment, or volunteering                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Personal life experiences or responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Hobbies and any extracurricular or outreach activities:                                                                                                                                                              | Achievements outside of school or college                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In-person or virtual work experience.</li><li>• Paid for work or volunteering.</li><li>• The key thing is reflection on the experiences and the skills gained relevant to your chosen course(s).</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is there a situation you've personally overcome that has influenced your decision?</li><li>• Are there personal experiences that have helped you develop essential qualities for the course?</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Think sports, reading, community work, summer schools.</li><li>• Any activities outside of core studies that help further showcase why you'd make a great student.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This could be a position of responsibility for local clubs or groups, competitions, or qualifications you've attained outside of the classroom.</li></ul> |

**Remember** these are just some examples, you don't need to include it all.  
The key is to research the course(s) to find out what might be most relevant.



# Universities & colleges will consider

- Have you chosen the course for the right reasons?
- Do you have a depth of interest in the subject?
- Do you appear motivated and committed?
- Can you study independently?
- Are you genuinely engaged and knowledgeable about the area you're applying to?



**For the UCAS Personal Statement, Universities value reflection on an activity over the activity itself:**



**Weak example, Computing applicant:** 'I attended a Newcastle University lecture on AI, which was interesting and reinforced my studies.'

**Strong example, Computing applicant:** 'Attending a Newcastle University lecture on AI introduced me to algorithmic bias in facial recognition, **challenging my assumption** that AI systems are objective. This **led me to explore** how training data shapes outcomes, **deepening my interest** in developing more ethical computing systems.'

# Examples

On Showbie there are some slides which include excerpts from real personal statements written by students at HGS.

It is important to remember that there is no 'correct' way to write the personal statement, and the word 'personal' in the title is deliberate, as it should reflect your own motivation and perspective. As such, a model personal statement does not exist.

# Research is the foundation

Research and preparation is key when you're starting to think about your personal statement.

**Before you start writing anything, take some time to:**

- mind map what you might want to include
- build up a bank of examples you can refer to
- list evidence of your skills and experiences
- rank your evidence and examples that are MOST relevant to the course(s) you're thinking of applying to

Don't worry about making your notes perfect; this is about checking you fully understand the course and have specifics to refer to in your personal statement.

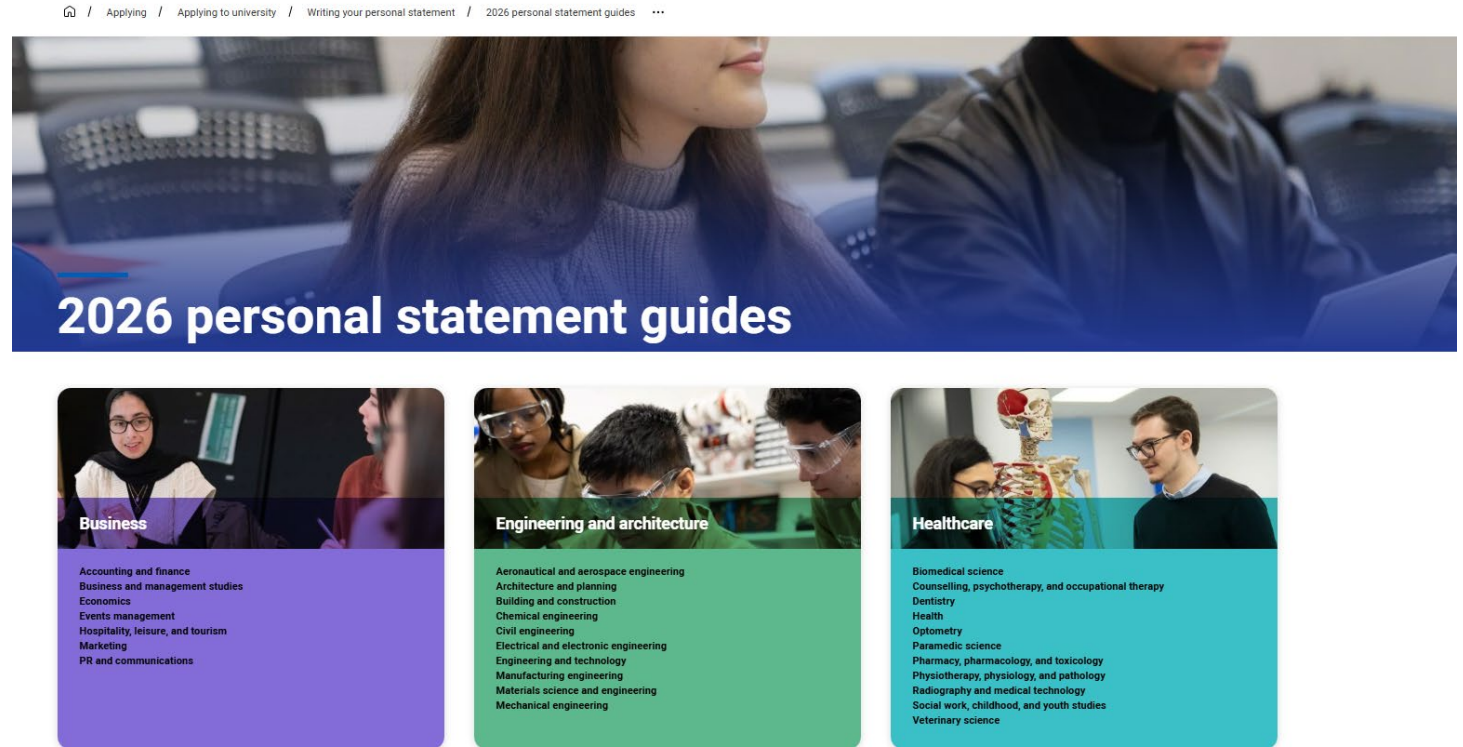
Whether you know what you're applying to or still considering your options, the more research you do the easier it will be to write.



# Where can I start?

- Start by looking at the course description; this'll help you with what to include and give you a good idea of what they are looking for.
- Attend an open day and ask faculty staff what they like to see in the personal statement.
- Explore the personal statement guides for the main subjects offered at University. These guides explain what admission tutors would be looking for from a personal statement for that subject.

<https://www.ucas.com/applying/applying-university/writing-your-personal-statement/2026-personal-statement-guides>



**Remember** requirements may differ for each university or college, as well as depending heavily on the course. So, this research on your chosen area of study is vital before you start writing your personal statement.

# Using Unifrog

You can also compare universities by entry requirements, hours of contact time, university rank and distance using this 'UK Universities' tab on Unifrog.

The Unifrog dashboard is organized into several sections:

- Quizzes**
  - Skills profile** (Quiz not taken)
  - Quiz profile** (0 of 4 quizzes complete)
- Recording**
  - Activities** (Recorded at least 10)
  - Skills** (Completed all 12)
  - Interactions** (Missing 5 Interaction types)
  - Academics** (1 Classes, 1 Predict missing)
- Exploring**
  - Careers library** (Careers favoured)
  - Subjects library** (Subjects favoured)
  - Know-how library** (Guides favoured)
  - Courses** (No courses added)
  - MOOCs** (You have 2 shortlists)
- Materials**
  - UK personal statement** (Subject added)
  - Subject References** (Overall Ref not finished / 1 Sub Ref, 1 not finished)
  - CV / Resumé** (Write CVs tailored for each roles)
- Searching** (Highlighted with an orange border)
  - UK universities** (0 shortlists)
  - European universities** (0 shortlists)
  - Oxbridge** (0 shortlists)
  - Apprenticeships** (0 shortlists)
  - Irish universities** (0 shortlists)
- Connecting**
  - Unifrog events** (Interact directly with experts)
  - Talent pool** (Not joined)

### Do

- Be clear and concise – the more concentrated the points and facts, the more powerful
- Include **relevant** information from your academic achievements, work experience and super-curricular tasks
- Include developed evidence of your learning and growth (wherever possible) to support claims and statements – “I read X and it encouraged me to explore the theme further, so I watched Y...”
- Link forward by explaining what you hope to achieve from completing this degree

### Don't

- List what you've done/watched/read
- List things you do in your spare time – only **relevant** examples should be used
- Over-exaggerate or lie! You may be called to interview and questioned on what you have written
- Be tempted to buy, copy or AI a personal statement – plagiarism software is now very sophisticated and if you're caught out you won't get a place
- Use gimmicks, quotes or make jokes

Research the course(s) you are interested in using UCAS and Unifrog. You need to know what admission tutors are expecting first, before you can write your personal statement. Then, identify your relevant experiences / achievements that you could include.



| What does my research about courses I am interested in tell me I need to include? | What are my own specific examples that are relevant and match with what they are looking for? | What do I still need to do/add to... |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                                                                                   |                                                                                               |                                      |

You may need to complete an admissions test as part of your application for certain universities. Please read through the admissions test information on showbie – it is mainly for students considering Oxbridge, Medical routes or courses such as Engineering and Mathematics.

< Progression Day 2026 + ⋮

🔍 Search

🗨️ Class Discussion  
paused

**ASSIGNED**

Timetable and Rooms  
no due date 3 >

Alumni Fair  
no due date 34 >

Personal Statement Workshop  
no due date 1 >

CV & Apprenticeship Workshop  
no due date >

Gap Year task - Thursday 2nd July  
no due date 5 >

Apprenticeship Tasks - Thursday 2nd July  
no due date 2 >

Oxbridge  
no due date >

Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science  
no due date >

Admissions Tests  
no due date >

Admissions Tests Information – 2026-2027 1 of 4 >

| Test | Typical Courses                                                       | Universities Using It                                                                                                                                                         |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| UCAT | Medicine, Dentistry                                                   | Most UK medical and dental schools including University of Cambridge, University of Oxford, King's, Bristol, Manchester, Nottingham and many others. ( <a href="#">UCAT</a> ) |
| LNAT | Law                                                                   | Oxford, UCL, KCL, LSE, Durham, Bristol, Glasgow and others. ( <a href="#">LNAT</a> )                                                                                          |
| ESAT | Engineering, Physical Sciences, Natural Sciences, Biomedical Sciences | Cambridge, Oxford, Imperial and some other science-focused courses. ( <a href="#">Oxford University</a> )                                                                     |
| TMUA | Mathematics, Computer Science, Economics-related courses              | Cambridge, Oxford, Imperial, Warwick, LSE and selected maths-intensive programmes. ( <a href="#">Oxford University</a> )                                                      |
| TARA | PPE, Economics, Psychology and other reasoning-based courses          | Oxford and some institutions participating in UAT-UK. ( <a href="#">Oxford University</a> )                                                                                   |
| STEP | Mathematics                                                           | Primarily Cambridge Mathematics offers and some imperial mathematics courses. Usually taken after receiving an offer. ( <a href="#">Reddit</a> )                              |

| Date                | Action                                                                          |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May–June 2026       | UCAT registration opens                                                         |
| June 2026           | UAT-UK registration opens (ESAT/TMUA/TARA)                                      |
| July–September 2026 | Book tests                                                                      |
| August–October 2026 | Sit UCAT/LNAT/ESAT/TMUA/TARA                                                    |
| 15 October 2026     | UCAS deadline for Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science |
| January 2027        | Equal consideration UCAS deadline for most courses                              |
| June 2027           | STEP examinations for Cambridge Mathematics offer holders                       |

## Admissions Tests Information

All Students

Sunday

# Using Unifrog

- 1) Log on to Unifrog
- 2) Select the 'UK personal statement' tab under 'materials'.  
You can also search for this.

The Unifrog dashboard is organized into five main sections, each with a header and a list of interactive cards. Each card includes a title, a status indicator (marked with an 'x'), and a right-pointing arrow.

- Quizzes**
  - Skills profile**: x Quiz not taken
  - Quiz profile**: x 0 of 4 quizzes complete
- Recording**
  - Activities**: x Recorded at least 10
  - Skills**: x Completed all 12
  - Interactions**: x Missing 5 Interaction types
  - Academics**: x 1 Classes, 1 Predict missing
- Searching**
  - UK universities**: 0 shortlists
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- Materials** (highlighted with an orange border)
  - UK personal statement**: x Subject added
- Connecting**
  - Subject References**: x Overall Ref not finished / 1 Sub Ref, 1 not finished
  - CV / Resumé**: x Write CVs tailored for each roles
  - Unifrog events**: Interact directly with experts
  - Talent pool**: x Not joined

An orange arrow originates from the 'Subjects library' card in the 'Exploring' section and points to the 'UK personal statement' card in the 'Materials' section.

# Using Unifrog

- 1) Log on to Unifrog
- 2) Select the 'UK personal statement' tab under 'materials'. You can also search for this.

Tomorrow, you are expected to complete your first draft of your personal statement and upload it to Unifrog by 3.30pm.



## Section 1

Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Characters: 0 (Min 350. Our recommendation is about 1200)

Start >



## Section 2

How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

Characters: 0 (Min 350. Our recommendation is about 1400)

Start >



## Section 3

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

Characters: 0 (Min 350. Our recommendation is about 1400)

Start >