

Ivybridge Community College

Sixth Form

UCAS
Student Information Booklet

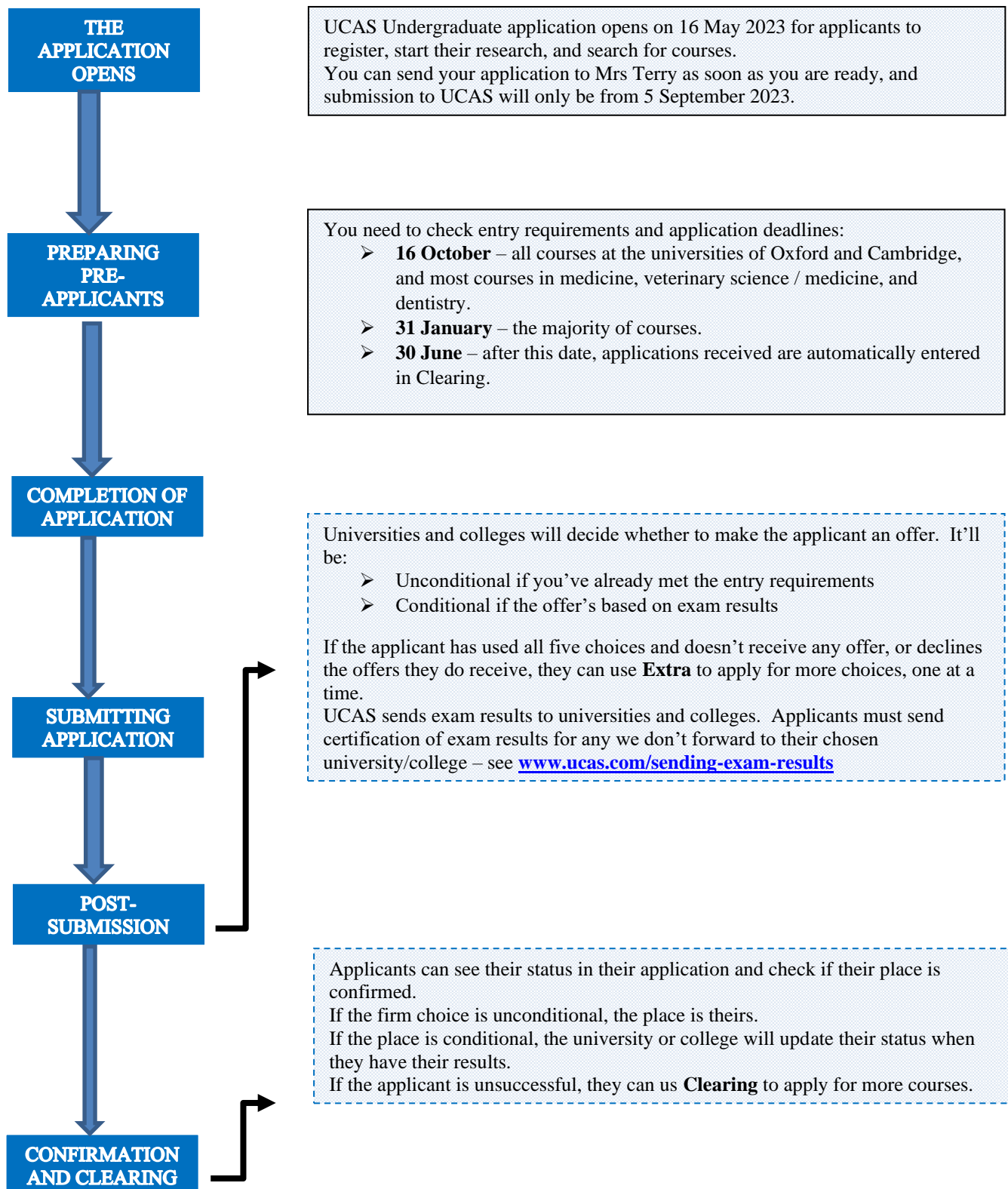
Entry 2024
Buzzword: ivybridge24



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JOURNEY OF AN APPLICATION



Entry 2024 Timeline

May 2023
UCAS search tool opens (Entry 2024)

Applications made to UCAS
September 2023 to January 2024

August 2024
Students receive their results.

September 2024
University course start

A Level and AS Level

BTEC Qualifications

Entry 2023

AS Level	AS Double Award	A Level	A Double Award	Tariff Points		BTEC Extended Diploma	BTEC Diploma	BTEC Subsidiary Diploma	BTEC Certificate	Tariff Points
			A*A*	112		D*D*D*				168
			A*A	104		D*D*D				160
			AA	96		D*DD				152
			AB	88		DDD				144
			BB	80		DDM				128
			BC	72		DMM	D*D*			112
			CC	64			D*D			104
		A*	CD	56		MMM	DD			96
		A	DD	48		MMP	DM			80
	AA	B	DE	40		MPP	MM			64
	AB			36				D*		56
	BB	C	EE	32		PPP	MP	D		48
	BC			28			PP	M		32
	CC	D		24					D*	28
	CD			22					D	24
A	DD			20				P	M	16
B	DE	E		16					P	8
C	EE			12						
D				10						
E				6						

Please note that the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is worth 50% of an A Level grade.

UCAS APPLY: Step-by-step instructions for student registration

Initial registration

UK university applications are made online on the UCAS Hub via Google **Chrome** on www.ucas.com. Unless you are applying to a Conservatoire (for performance-based courses), you should select undergraduate courses for **2024 entry**. For advice on applying to foreign universities, see the *Know-how library* on Unifrog.

Once you have selected **Undergraduate 2024 entry**, click on *register* and follow the steps, making a note of your username and password in a safe place.

When asked 'How are you applying?' select the option *Through my school/college*.

You will now need to fill in the buzzword, which is **ivybridge24** [all lower case]. A buzzword is a word or phrase that is chosen by the College, and it enables us to write and attach your reference, and send the application to UCAS once all parts, including the reference, are complete.

After entering the buzzword, you will then be asked if you are registering through Ivybridge Community College, so select yes.

Scroll down and select your relevant Tutor Group; then click *next*, and continue through the registration process until the end.

You can now log in using your username and password. Once you have done this (and the application is open) you will be able to begin filling out your information. On-screen help will guide you through your application.

Completing the rest of the form

Once you have set up an account with UCAS and signed in, you will see a number of Sections and Sub-Sections. **You must complete all mandatory sections and you can't skip any sections.** These must all be complete before your application can be sent. But you don't have to do it all at once – sign in and save your progress at any time.

Choices

You have up to five choices unless you are applying for a medical course, in which case you have up to four.

- You do not have to use all five choices.
- Medics, Vets and Dentists may wish to use their fifth choice to include a related but alternative course.

This is an obvious point, but do not apply to a university that you would not be happy to go to. Many students end up rejecting their Insurance choice after being rejected by their Firm choice – this should not happen because students should be happy to go to their Insurance choice!

If you fill your choices with universities that all make similar offers, your options will be limited:

- If it turns out you are doing better or worse in your studies than you had thought you would, you won't have appropriate offers to choose from.
- Your eventual Firm and Insurance choices are likely to make you similar offers, which is pointless! So choose four or five universities that make a range of offers.

When researching your universities, you should pay attention to the grades that have been predicted for you. There is little point in applying to a university that is going to make you an offer that you cannot realistically achieve. You can see these predicted grades in *Unifrog*. They will appear before the summer holidays, and they are subject to review in September. Your final predicted grades will be confirmed by Friday, 27 September.

Avoid too great a mix of subjects across your five choices. You will only write one Personal Statement that will be sent to all of your institutions, and it is difficult to write a personal statement that supports an application to read English and another to read Chemistry! However, if you really want to apply for very different subjects, an additional personal statement can be sent directly to particular universities after your application has been made. See Mrs Terry if this relates to you, and she will assist.

There is no order of preference in your choices. Apply will list them on your form in alphabetical order. When it is complete, UCAS will send your application to all of your universities individually. Each institution will know that you are applying to them and will have no information about the others you are interested in.

Profile:

Students complete a profile, including the following sections:

- **Personal details**

Email address & mobile: You must provide these. This will be the main method by which UCAS and universities contact you. Use your personal email, **not your school email** as UCAS and universities will still be in contact with you after you have left school. It might be an idea to have a business email for this purpose which you could then use for all future work-related emails.

- **Contact & Residency details**

Nominated Access: Your nominee (chosen person) will have the authority to discuss your results and offers on your behalf with either your school, UCAS or universities. It is only necessary to nominate a person if you will be unable to discuss your application at any stage and especially on A Level results day.

- **Nationality details**

- **Supporting information**

- **English Language skills**

- **Finance & Funding**

Select an option from the drop-down list to tell us how you expect to pay for your tuition fees. Most applicants from the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, and those eligible EU students under the EU Settlement Scheme will be in the category UK, ChI, IoM, or EU student finance. Applicants for a National Health Service (NHS) course will select DH/Regional Health.

Experience

- **Education**

You enter the schools you have attended since the age of 11 and the qualifications you have gained.

Qualification certificates will be very useful to you as you complete this section, as you must include the grade, subject and examining body.

For each qualification, the date that is requested is the date of the certification of the qualification. Your GCSEs and any AS Levels you have will have been certified by the time you fill in the form. The date for your A Levels will be August.

You must include all your examination results. If you are resitting any units, you must enter the qualification twice – once with your current result and a second time as *pending*.

- **Employment**
This covers full-time and part-time employment but not voluntary work. If you have not had any paid work experience then leave the section blank, but you will still have to mark it as complete.

Your Personal Statement

You have 4000 characters on 47 lines of text in which to sell yourself to the universities. There is more advice later in this booklet; however, please be aware that all Personal Statements are subjected to sophisticated plagiarism detection software that checks them against all previously submitted statements, published books and the internet. If plagiarism is detected in your statement, UCAS will contact you and will also inform all of your universities.

Reference

This will normally be written by your Tutor. Your reference will also include predicted grades for any qualifications that you have started but are yet to complete; e.g. A Levels and National Diplomas.

Once written, your reference will be sent electronically to UCAS.

Payment

UCAS charges for 2024 cycle are a single application fee of £27.50 allowing up to five choices. This allows applicants to take advantage of the additional services available, including UCAS Extra, Clearing and Clearing Plus. You are responsible for making this payment online using a credit or debit card. You cannot submit your application until you have paid for it.

UCAS procedures, including writing your personal statement

Your Tutor will review your personal statement and provide feedback. To facilitate this, please initially complete your personal statement in the UK Personal Statement tool on *Unifrog* prior to copying over to your UCAS application.

When your Tutor is satisfied that your personal statement is of a sufficient standard to be used in your application, they will mark it as *Ready to add to Locker*. You can then export a copy of the personal statement to your Locker to use in your application. Alternatively, you can export to a *Word* document (or similar application) to copy and paste into your application. Please do not attempt to upload the personal statement to your UCAS application until your Tutor has marked it as ready (Mrs Terry will check this).

Once you think you have completed your UCAS application (including uploading your personal statement), arrange an appointment time with Mrs Terry to review the application form on-line. Mrs Terry will instruct you to complete the process from your end by clicking on pay/send.

Meanwhile the Sixth Form Office will request a reference to be written by your Tutor, which is checked and authorised by the Head of Sixth Form. When this is complete, which may take up to **four weeks** depending on demand at the time you apply, the Sixth Form Office will add the reference to your online application and send it to UCAS.

NB: Your application cannot be sent if you have not paid.

Deadlines

Applications for Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science must be at UCAS by 16 October 2023.

In-house deadline for applications is 19 September 2023.

All other UCAS applications must be at UCAS by 31 January 2024.

In-house deadline for applications is 11 November 2023.



Choosing a course

There are over 55,000 higher education courses listed in UCAS, offered at over 300 institutions. With so many options available, choosing a course can be a difficult decision. This is where *Unifrog* comes into its own. You can use the *Subjects library*, or the *Universities* tabs in the *Search for opportunities* section. This is by far the easiest way to search for courses, and you can compare features of courses effortlessly. You will also be encouraged to consider courses for which you will definitely achieve the grades and those that are slightly more aspirational. Additionally, you will find help on choosing courses in the *Know-how library*,

How might I further find out about courses?

As well as on *Unifrog*, you may find the following useful:

- To search for particular subjects and courses: www.ucas.com. Although *Unifrog* links to all available courses, [ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) is the definitive resource, since UCAS manages the application process.
- Higher Education fairs where you can meet representatives from universities
- University websites
- University prospectuses and course leaflets
- Independent university guides such as *The Times Good University Guide 2024*
- League tables to help you investigate which universities are best for particular course:
<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings>
- Visit universities to get an idea of what courses involve. Most universities hold open days, master classes and taster sessions. You can find taster courses and summer schools at:
<https://unitasterdays.com/> and a list of university open days at:
<https://ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/events-and-open-days>
- Talk to people who are already studying the subject

Points to remember when researching courses

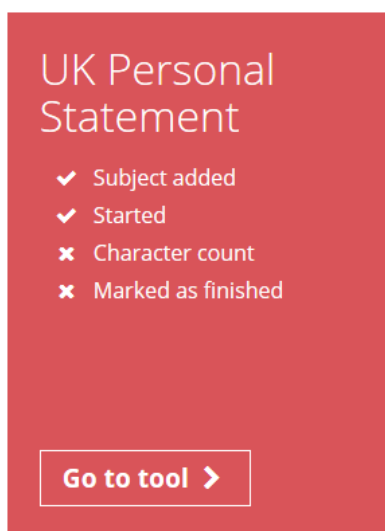
- What are the course options? How does the content vary between universities?
- How long is the course?
- How is the course assessed? How much of the course is assessed by final exam, coursework or ongoing assessment?
- How is the course taught? What is the ratio of formal lectures and seminars to independent study? Is there a final year dissertation / research project?
- Are there opportunities to do a work placement or study abroad for part of your course?
- Is it possible to study more than one subject (combined degree) or study a few modules from other courses, for example languages or IT?
- What sorts of jobs do graduates from the course go on to do?
- What are the entry requirements? Make sure the entry requirements are in line with your predicted grades. If you are at all unsure, telephone the admissions tutor for your subject (telephone numbers are listed in university prospectuses).

A tariff calculator has been designed to help you calculate your score to determine whether you meet the entry requirements for the course.

Writing your personal statement

We ask you to write your personal statement on *Unifrog*, so that your Tutor can provide feedback and we can monitor how applications are proceeding.

To find this section, scroll down on your *Unifrog* home page to the *Drafting application materials* section, and select *UK Personal Statement*.



Although the final personal statement that you will complete on your application is one continuous piece of prose, as a default, *Unifrog* invites you to write the statement in three sections:

- Why this subject
- Your suitability
- Other interests

This is relatively simplistic, but at least gets you started. If you want, you can convert to a single box layout.

The following guidance on how to write a personal statement comes from UCAS itself, and it is a pretty good guide to what your personal statement should contain.

Your personal statement: A guide to writing from UCAS

Your personal statement is your chance to tell universities and colleges why they should want you as a student. Admissions Officers will want to know why you are interested in the courses that you have applied for and what you hope to do after your studies. **A good personal statement is important** - it could help to persuade an Admissions Officer to offer you a place. In many cases, applicants are not interviewed, so this may be your only chance to make the case for your admission.

Where to start

- Course descriptions mention the qualities, skills and experience it's useful to have for each subject – take note of these to help you decide what to write about.
- Remember it is the same personal statement for all the courses you apply to, so avoid mentioning universities and colleges by name. Most students choose similar subjects, but if you have chosen a variety, just write about common themes – like problem solving or creativity.

What to write about

In essence, a personal statement should explain:

1. Why you are applying – your ambitions and what interests you about the subject, course providers and higher education.
2. What makes you suitable – any relevant skills, experience or achievements gained from education, work or other activities.

You should always try to link what you write to these two points.

How to write it

There is no definite formula to follow – just take your time and follow these guidelines.

- Structure your info to reflect the skills and qualities the universities and colleges value most.
- Write in an enthusiastic, concise and natural style – nothing too complex.
- Try to stand out, but be careful with humour, quotes or anything unusual – just in case the Admissions Tutor does not have the same sense of humour as you.
- Proofread aloud and get your teachers, advisers and family to check – then redraft until you are happy with it and the grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct.

To help you work out specifically what sort of things to include, look at the *My UCAS Personal Statement* summary sheet on the following page, and then try working through the *Personal Statement worksheet* over the next few pages. This will help you think about the things you should include in your statement, and the order of the boxes follows a sensible order for the statement itself. After completing this, you should be in a position to produce your first draft. If you are struggling in terms of how to structure the personal statement, you could also try using the paragraph-by-paragraph guide, but remember that the statement is a *personal* one, so there is no single way to structure it.

How to provide your personal statement to UCAS

You can enter up to 4,000 characters (this includes spaces) or 47 lines of text (this includes blank lines). You do not have to use all the space provided. When you enter text on your application form, the system will tell you how many characters are still available and whether you have used too many characters. You can preview your statement after you have saved it. *Unifrog* will provide you with a character count, too.

You will not be able to change the presentation of your personal statement by using features such as **bold**, *italic* or underlined text or foreign characters, such as á, ë, ö. If you use these types of formatting or foreign characters, they will be removed from the text when you paste it onto your application and save it.

Please note that Apply will time-out after 35 minutes of inactivity. When you enter your personal statement directly into Apply, you must save it to prevent your work being lost.

Make sure that your personal statement is your own work

Verification checks for identity and academic qualifications are carried out, as are test applications to detect plagiarism. If there is a cause to question an application, UCAS will inform all the universities and colleges to which you have applied. They will then take the action they consider to be appropriate. They will also contact you by email.

Please see the *Unifrog* article *Writing like a boss: the Personal Statement* in the *Resources Library* for extra guidance.

My UCAS personal statement

1

1

Preparation

- You can only write one, so don't mention a uni or college by name
- Check uni and college websites to see what skills and qualities they'd like you to have
- Make a list of things you want to include
- Start drafting early

2

2

What to include

- Why you're interested in the subject
- Your enthusiasm for the subject
- How your previous studies relate to the course(s)
- Relevant aspects of jobs, placements, work experience or volunteering
- Demonstrate you're a great candidate and you have skills and qualities they're looking for
- Activities or hobbies that show your interest in the subject
- Any training or achievements that show your skills

3

3

How to write it

- Introduction – start with an opening sentence that encourages the reader to read on
- Structure what you want to include in an order that's most relevant to what the unis and colleges are looking for
- Conclusion – reinforce your commitment, enthusiasm and skills suited to uni / college life
- Check your grammar, spelling and punctuation
- Leave time to get feedback and redraft

4

4

Technical details

- Length – up to 4,000 characters or 47 lines of text (including spaces and blank lines)
- Make sure you don't copy – our software detects any similarities and this could jeopardise your application

Personal statement worksheet

This worksheet is designed to help you think about information you could include in your personal statement. We've included space for you to write down any thoughts you have as you go along. More detailed advice and guidance about writing your personal statement, including our UCAStv video guide, is available at www.ucas.com/personalstatement.

Writing about the course

Why are you applying for your chosen course(s)?

Why does this subject interest you? Include evidence that you understand what's required to study the course, e.g. if applying for psychology courses, show that you know how scientific the subject is.

Why do you think you're suitable for the course(s)? Do you have any particular skills and experience that will help you to succeed on the course(s)?

Personal statement worksheet

Do your current or previous studies relate to the course(s) that you have chosen? If so, how?

Have you taken part in any other activities that demonstrate your interest in the course(s)?

Skills and achievements

Universities like to know the skills you have that will help you on the course, or generally with life at university, such as any accredited or non-accredited achievements. Write these down here. Examples can be found at www.ucas.com/personalstatementskills.

Also think about any other achievements you're proud of, positions of responsibility that you hold or have held both in and out of school, and attributes that make you interesting, special or unique.

Personal statement worksheet

Hobbies and interests

Make a list of your hobbies, interests and social activities. Then think about how they demonstrate your personality, skills and abilities. Try to link them to the skills and experience required for your course(s).

Work experience

Include details of jobs, placements, work experience or voluntary work, particularly if it's relevant to your chosen course(s). Try to link any experience to skills or qualities related to the course.

Mature students

Explain what you've been doing since leaving education, and provide additional evidence to support your application. If you're not in full-time education, you should give details of any relevant work experience, paid or unpaid, and information about your current or previous employment.

Personal statement worksheet

International students

Tell universities why you want to study in the UK and why you think you can successfully complete a course that is taught in English. Say if some of your studies have been taught or examined in English and if you have taken part in any activities where you have used English outside of your studies.

Future plans

If you know what you'd like to achieve after completing the course, explain how you want to use the knowledge and experience that you gain. How does the course relate to what you want to do in the future?

Dos when writing your personal statement

- Do use your best English and don't let spelling and grammatical errors spoil your statement.
- Do show that you know your strengths and can outline your ideas clearly. Use words you know will be understood by the person reading your statement.
- Do be enthusiastic – if you show your interest in the course, it may help you get a place.
- Do expect to produce several drafts of your personal statement before being totally happy with it.
- Do ask people you trust for their feedback.

Don'ts when writing your personal statement

- Don't exaggerate – if you do you may get caught out at interview when asked to elaborate on an interesting achievement.
- Don't rely on a spellchecker as it will not pick up everything – proofread as many times as possible.
- Don't leave it to the last minute – your statement will seem rushed and important information could be left out.

Personal statements: paragraph-by-paragraph guide

A strong personal statement is like a good essay. It should contain an introduction that gives the rationale and summarises the content to be discussed; a main section that expands, in turn, on each of the topics mentioned in the introduction; and a conclusion that summarises the main content and provides future directions. The following is an example of how it could be structured, paragraph-by-paragraph.

Introduction – *sell them the justification in one paragraph*

Here you need to make clear your passion for the subject in a distinctly personal manner (e.g. include any formative experiences) and reason(s) for wanting to continue it at university. Then, in no more than two sentences, summarise the key messages that are contained in the bulk of the statement.



Relation of current studies to the course

Explain how your current A-level choices relate to the subject and how they make you suitable for the course. In so doing, you should be able to demonstrate that you know what the university course will entail. Towards the end of this paragraph, bring in any of your other key academic skills that are relevant to the course.



Other activities related to the course

Explain how from an interest, a wish to develop skills related to the course, or gain experience, etc. you have taken part in other activities related to the course and how this makes you a very suitable candidate. Include directly relevant work experience here (e.g. lab work if applying for a Biology degree).



Achievements and positions of responsibility

Discuss any notable achievements that you have had – both academic and non-academic – and make links with the course (if you can) in terms of the skills that you acquired. Some of your activities should also demonstrate maturity and readiness for university life in general.



Hobbies and interests

Now try to create the portrait of an interesting person whom anyone would want on their campus – someone who will add to university life. You should stress how you wish to continue with/extend your hobbies at university, especially if there will be related university clubs, such as debating.



Conclusion and perspectives – *remind them of your justification and put you and the course in perspective*

Here, you remind the reader of your passion for the subject and how you are fully equipped to tackle such a degree course. Finish by opening up to where you want this course to take you in the future.

Example personal statements

A good idea to work out how you are going to lay-out and write your personal statement is to look at some examples. This gives you a chance to see the sort of structure and language other people use, how they explained why they wanted to study their chosen course and also their own interests and abilities.

When you read through statements if you find anything you have done but have not already thought about note it down. Also after reading lots of personal statements you will be able to judge which ones you think are good or bad, and find parts of statements you really like or dislike.

There are lots of example personal statements within subjects guides or the *Know-how* library on *Unifrog*, many with analysis of their strengths and weaknesses.

There is also a very comprehensive bank of statements by subject on *The Student Room* website at <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/university/personal-statements/personal-statements-by-subject> and on the *Studential* website at <https://www.studential.com/university/applying/UCAS-application-guide/personal-statement-examples/subjects>. Remember, though, these are just examples, and some are better than others!

The following pages contain some examples, some with evaluations of strengths and weaknesses.

An Example and Analysis of a Personal Statement

To read Geography

My decision to read Geography stems from a lifelong fascination with the natural world. Studying Geography should prove to be a stimulating experience in which I hope to gain a detailed knowledge of all areas spanning physical, human, urban and economic Geography. I look forward to tackling topics within each of these areas by working both independently and with other like-minded people. Having enjoyed lectures at the Geography Open Day at Fitzwilliam College, I feel that I would enjoy the intellectual challenge provided by the Cambridge Geography course. As well as benefiting from the academic environment I would like to contribute to the sporting and social aspects of student life. At school I have enjoyed being a member of the school hockey first XI, as well as participating in other sports including badminton, tennis and swimming. As a Senior Prefect I have developed a range of skills including teamwork and leadership qualities along with an ability to manage my time efficiently to balance the demands of academic study and the Prefect responsibilities. I enjoy discussion and look forward to questioning geographical concepts during my study. This will prepare me well for my intended career in Geography and, being a world renowned centre for research, I feel that Cambridge is the best place for me to do this.

STRENGTHS

- Deals with the reasons why Geography has been chosen.
- Mentions attendance at Open Day to reinforce the interest in the course, although any evidence of interest in the course can be used - it is not necessary to attend the Open Day.
- Offers broader information about sporting and school responsibilities which does not take up the majority of the space available for the Cambridge statement does mean that it is likely that more issues will be mentioned than just choice of course and college.
- Addresses choice of Cambridge over Oxford (ie. centre of research) though the statement has not mentioned any particular research which might have been attributed to Cambridge.
- Although the statement does not deal with the choice of Fitzwilliam in any direct way, it does state that the student has visited the college and therefore knows something about it.

WEAKNESSES

- Could mention at least one aspect which supports the claimed 'fascination' with the natural world. Remember during an interview tutors might ask about items from the Personal Statement so it is important to ensure that any claims can be supported e.g. with details, examples, explanations.
- No mention of any interesting topics/ issues studied thus far which reinforces the choice of course.
- No mention of any extra reading in Geography. This is not essential but might show you have tried to do further study independently.

An Example and Analysis of a Personal Statement

To read Modern Languages

The ideas in Camus' work stimulated my interest to read more philosophical literature, particularly existential writing, including Sartre. Being from a Sri Lankan family in Britain, I have experienced a fascinating contrast in culture and ideas. I found Forster's 'Passage to India' highlighted an interesting distinction between the Indian and British 'mind'; Rushdie, Roy and Mistry's portrayals also underline such a distinction. Being a language assistant in France will be invaluable in ascertaining if such differences occur between French and British who share a similar heritage. Reading novels by Marques and other writers from Latin America will help my understanding of their region and I am eager to acquaint myself with the writers from the former French colonies. I took to the relaxed, friendly atmosphere at Somerville; I believed I would settle in well and enjoy working with both the lecturers and students there.

STRENGTHS

- Each sentence develops a different point and therefore provides information in a short space.
- Centres around both the choices of course and college. With such a limited space available it is crucial to focus on these issues, particularly the choices of course.
- Some impressive issues raised and reading offered – the applicant must ensure that all the points can be developed further with a degree of confidence in an interview.
- Offers ideas about western and non-western ways of thinking which is a bold and confident approach and is likely to attract a reader's interest – the theme approach is not necessary but it does show that you can be imaginative in the way you write your statement. The important point to remember is that you should be genuine and convincing in the way you deal with the choice of course. Take advice about what to include and more effective expression but write the statement yourself.

WEAKNESSES

- Would be useful to mention at least one idea from the work of Camus which stimulated a wish to read more philosophical literature, though sometimes it can be useful to leave one or two points to be followed up at the interview's discretion during an interview.

Could mention another writer from the former French colonies apart from Camus to offer a more convincing statement even if, to save space, a writer was placed in brackets at the end of the sentence.

Improving a Personal Statement

A PERSONAL STATEMENT HAS BEEN CAREFULLY CHOSEN TO HIGHLIGHT A RANGE OF PROBLEMS.

Two versions of the Personal Statement are presented:

The 'BEFORE' version is an early draft. The 'AFTER' version is the improved and final draft.

To help you understand how and why the Personal Statement needs improving the section is divided into three parts:

IMPROVING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

- Part One:** A 'before' version. This is an early draft of the Personal Statement which needs improving. The full Personal Statement is provided.
- Part Two:** An 'After' version. This is the final draft after the improvements have been made. The full Personal Statement is provided.
- Part Three:** A paragraph - by - paragraph analysis of the Personal Statement.
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PART ONE:

The 'Before' version

The following student has written a Personal Statement to support an application to read History. It is an early draft which needs improving

I enjoy History lessons so I have decided to pursue the subject at degree level. At university I look forward to examining a range of historical sources. I am particularly interested in French history, and trips to France have broadened my historical awareness.

As a school prefect I hold many responsibilities: organising and attending school functions, delivering speeches to the school body, being an active member of the school council, working effectively with other students. Having played in school concerts with the keyboard orchestra when I was in year nine, I have recently taken up piano lessons.

I am a keen sports player and I am a member of the school hockey team, netball team, the athletics squad and the volleyball team, earning me the "Sports Personality of the Year" award. I have taught information technology skills to younger students and helped a particular student to overcome language difficulties. I have organised sports days and Christmas parties for the elderly; and written, directed and performed a series of short plays.

I have always enjoyed reading but more recently my 'A' level studies have enabled me to explore foreign literature.

Currently, I am involved in the European Youth Parliament Competition in which I will be representing my school at a residential debating conference. The winner will represent the United Kingdom in Cyprus. This venture enhanced my general knowledge (specifically of genetic engineering and drug legislation).

PART TWO:

The 'After' version

The following student has improved their Personal Statement from the earlier draft.

I have always been fascinated by the past, beginning with childhood interests in time-travel and mythology. This interest continued with student exchanges to France and Germany which gave me the opportunity to study 18th century French history and dictatorship and to widen my historical scope. A trip to France, where I studied issues relating to the World Wars, confirmed my interest in History and my decision to pursue the subject at degree level. At university I look forward to analysing varied interpretations of history and the original sources upon which they are based.

As a school prefect I have held many responsibilities such as organising school events, delivering speeches, and participating actively on the school council. This experience has taught me to use my own initiative, and developed my skills of public speaking and diplomacy. I also involve myself fully with the school music performances. Having played in concerts with the keyboard orchestra, I have recently taken up piano lessons and gained a wider awareness of music, especially of Debussy and romanticism.

Playing in various school sports' teams has earned me several awards including that of "Sports Personality of the Year", and taught me the importance of communication, teamwork and self-reliance. Organising a series of plays and other events for the elderly was a fulfilling challenge. I also found that the experience of assisting younger pupils with IT and language development was extremely rewarding.

I have always enjoyed reading, but more recently my A Level studies have enabled me to explore foreign literature. Brecht is particularly absorbing for his insight into the way people attempt to overcome the horrors of war.

Currently, I am helping to produce a film for the European Student Travel Company concerning the career opportunities for young people in Europe. Also, I represented my school at a national selection conference for the European Youth Parliament. This venture not only enhanced my general knowledge, but improved my teamwork, language and debating skills, which will be particularly useful for my course at university.

PART THREE:

The paragraph – by – paragraph analysis

The Personal Statement to read History has been broken down into a series of paragraphs with the 'Before' paragraph and the 'After' (or improved paragraph). Between these two paragraphs is an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses.

PARAGRAPH 1

BEFORE

"I enjoy History lessons so I have decided to pursue the subject at degree level. At university, I look forward to examining a range of historical sources. I am particularly interested in French history, and trips to France have broadened my historical awareness."

EVALUATION

Strengths

- Does attempt to start with a reason about the choice of degree.
- Each sentence tries to offer a different point

Weaknesses

- A more insightful reason might be used to explain the choice of course
- Could state what the student wants out of the degree
- Could mention which areas of history are of interest
- Words such as history are used twice in one sentence
- The last sentence does not make sense as it does not link the two separate points

AFTER

"I have always been fascinated by the past, beginning with childhood interests in time-travel and mythology. This interest continued with student exchanges to France and Germany which gave me the opportunity to study 18th century French history and dictatorship and to widen my historical scope. A trip to France, where I studied issues relating to the World Wars, confirmed my interest in History and my decision to pursue the subject at degree level. At University I look forward to analysing varied interpretations of history and the original sources upon which they are based."

PARAGRAPH 2

BEFORE

"As a school prefect I hold many responsibilities: organising and attending school functions, delivering speeches to the school body, being an active member of the school council, working effectively with other students. Having played in school concerts with the keyboard orchestra when I was in year nine, I have recently taken up piano lessons."

EVALUATION

Strengths

- Being in a position of responsibility is useful to mention (ie. a school prefect)
- Examples are provided about the prefect duties
- Provides an image of a student with varied interests (eg. Music)
- Quite concise about the musical experience

Weaknesses

- No mention of the skills gained from being a school prefect
- Problem in relating school prefect to musical experiences: it needs a phrase to link the two together
- Omit the reference to Year Nine as it seems that the experience was too long ago to be relevant given the more recent responsibilities and experiences
- Has learning the piano really sold the student?

AFTER

"As a school prefect I have held many responsibilities such as organising school events, delivering speeches, and participating actively on the school council. This experience has taught me to use my own initiative, and developed my skills of public speaking and diplomacy. I also involve myself fully with the school music performances. Having played in concerts with the keyboard orchestra, I have recently taken up piano lessons and gained a wider awareness of music, especially of Debussy and romanticism."

PARAGRAPH 3

BEFORE

I am a keen sports player and I am a member of the school hockey team, netball team, the athletics squad and the volleyball team, earning me the "Sports Personality of the Year" award. I have taught information technology skills to younger students and helped a particular student to overcome language difficulties. I have organised sports days and Christmas parties for the elderly; and written, directed and performed a series of short plays.

EVALUATION

Strengths

- Presents an image of an active and well-rounded individual not just academic
- Valuable to include a reference to IT at some stage
- Assisting other people presents another aspect of the student's personality

Weaknesses

- Too many sentences begin the same way; they nearly all start with 'I'
- Useful to mention the skills gained from participating in team sports
- Student is unlikely to have helped a child to completely overcome language difficulties
- Could be more concise about work in the theatre

AFTER

Playing in various school sports teams has earned me several awards including that of "Sports Personality of the Year", and taught me the importance of communication, teamwork and self-reliance. Organising a series of plays and other events for the elderly was a fulfilling challenge. I also found that the experience of assisting younger pupils with IT and language development was extremely rewarding.

PARAGRAPH 4

BEFORE

I have always enjoyed reading but more recently my A Level studies have enabled me to explore foreign literature.

EVALUATION

Strengths

- If reading is enjoyable then it is useful to state this in the Personal Statement

Weaknesses

- There is a need to state what particular areas the student enjoys and why

AFTER

I have always enjoyed reading, but more recently my A Level studies have enabled me to explore foreign literature. Brecht is particularly absorbing for his insight into the way people attempt to overcome the horrors of war.

PARAGRAPH 5

BEFORE

Currently, I am involved in the European Youth Parliament Competition in which I will be representing my school at a residential debating conference. The winner will represent the United Kingdom in Cyprus. This venture enhanced my general knowledge (specifically of genetic engineering and drug legislation).

EVALUATION

Strengths

- Excellent to include role in an academic competition which involved public speaking
- Useful to be specific: stating the issue discussed in the competition

Weaknesses

- The competition is important to mention but the prize is perhaps not so useful
- No mention of the skills gained from having taken part in the competition
- No link to the degree is made at the end of the paragraph ie. No concluding statement

AFTER

Currently, I am helping to produce a film for the European Student Travel Company concerning the career opportunities for young people in Europe. Also, I represented my school at a national selection conference for the European Youth Parliament. This venture not only enhanced my general knowledge, but improved my teamwork, language and debating skills, which will be particularly useful for my course at university.

Example Personal Statement - Geography

I have always found Geography absorbing and on continuing my studies, have increasingly enjoyed the economic and social aspects of the subject. I therefore wish to study a human based degree in Geography. The University of Plymouth held a Geography open day in September 2006, which confirmed to me that I would enjoy further study in the field, particularly following my attendance of a short lecture and debate on Globalisation, which raised a multitude of questions in my mind, and showed the many faceted ways of viewing a single issue. This appealed to me as I love to explore topics from different angles and find the complexities of socio-economic issues in Geography fascinating. For example the Globalisation talk focused on the clothing industry and differing views of people and organisations involved. The lecture made me consider the effects of the actions of people in both a positive and negative light and from an environmental as well as a socio-economic point of view. Few other subjects give the opportunity to explore and study single issues from such a variety of angles, such as political, environmental and social perspectives, and with such variable conclusions as to their benefit, and these thinking processes stimulate me to want to learn more. The debate also showed the potential scope for further research and study, leading me to choose a human based topic for my A Level Geography coursework: studying the factors which affect the spatial variation of the incidence of HIV/AIDS in countries at different levels of development. Furthermore, having studied Advanced Level Geography modules in Economics and Advanced Level pure Mathematics, a Geography degree which has the possibility of pursuing these themes in greater depth attracts me and seems the logical choice. Although I am currently unsure of what I wish to do in the future, I hope that a degree in Geography will enable me to further explore avenues of interest, allowing me to reach a decision. Having enjoyed mentoring younger students in the subject of Biology, which included rat dissections, identifying key parts of the physiology and explaining processes of organs to the pupils, I have exploited and developed strong leadership qualities. These skills have also been used in my participation of The Ten Tors Expedition, in which I have achieved both the Bronze and Silver Awards, and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, in which I have achieved Bronze, Silver and am working towards the Gold Award. These activities have presented a range of challenges, both physical and mental, which have demanded skills which can be applied to many situations, such as a strong sense of self-motivation and teamwork. These skills have already proved useful in the workplace whilst working as a Personal Assistant and waitress during my gap year and were of invaluable aid during examinations as they required many hours of work, as well as strong time management skills to find a balance between all of my activities. In addition, having had a horse for the past four years I have been trained in strict time management, especially during the winter when I get up at 5:45am to tend to her and be on time for school, complete assignments, and coursework and participate in other, aforementioned activities. The skills gained by my activities are transferable to both paid work and further study and being a person who has participated in both team and solo activities I can bring a valuable contribution to the university student community. Following my A Level Examinations I have worked in two jobs simultaneously to fund a three month Gap Year trip to Goa in November to voluntarily teach underprivileged children Mathematics, conversational English and Computer skills. During my trip I hope to revitalize my enthusiasm for learning, refocus and push myself out of my comfort zone and become a more mature, independent adult, ready for a fresh start as a student in 2009.

Example Personal Statement - Sport

I want to become a Physical Education Teacher because I want to use the knowledge that I have to help others. I think this is important so that children can get the same opportunities in sport that I have had, and I want them to progress and push themselves to the best of their ability and go far with their sport. I have had some experience in teaching and coaching: I teach football to 5 year olds on Saturday mornings. I am able to do this because I have a level one coaching qualification, also a first aid, child protection and C.R.B check. I love coaching because I feel that I am helping others and also doing something that I love.

I am studying a Extended Diploma in Sport (BTEC); I enjoy this course because it is practically based which means that I am always active and participating in many of my favourite sports. One of my favourite modules has been injuries and treatment in sport; this is a brilliant aspect to the course because it is practically based and it also gives me knowledge into the different variety of treatment methods and how to treat them, The knowledge I have gained had obvious applications, for example using the p.r.i.c.e. technique for players that have an injury. I also enjoyed leadership in sport which was a good subject for me because we taught other students knowledge and rules about different sports. The age ranged from 5 years up to the age of 17. I liked sharing my knowledge with others because I knew I was helping them both by either giving them knowledge or by boosting their confidence. I thoroughly enjoy teaching others and encouraging them to do well within their sport.

I would like to apply to the Physical Education - Secondary Education Course, because I feel that I would excel in this area of sport and also I can help others, keeping them motivated and interested in Physical Education. Also by working with children at different ages and abilities, I can give those children knowledge into different sports that are available to them and also give them the encouragement they need to participate. I have many interests outside of school, as well as coaching football to youngsters on the weekend, I also play football for Lipson United Ladies, and have also represented Devon U18s against Somerset, I attended Plymouth Argyle U16s Development centre. I play football at college and have done since Year 7; I am now the captain of the Ladies' first team at the Ivybridge Community College. I have many qualifications both academic and sporting: as well as my level one coaching qualification, first aid and child protection certificates, I have a tag rugby refereeing and coaching certificate. I have had numerous good sporting certificates to show my achievements and hard work throughout the Physical Education department. I am very proud of all the qualifications I have achieved.

I have a job, which is based in Modbury at Client Base which is a call centre. I have to answer the telephone which shows that I have confidence to talk to people. I have good computer knowledge. I have done work experience as part of my BTEC course, I did this at the Ivybridge Fitness Centre, during the 10 week placement I had numerous jobs such as, answering the phone, organising sports events.

I believe that I have the motivation and determination to become a Physical Education teacher, and I will try to apply all my knowledge to gain this qualification. The children are my inspiration and I will try to apply my knowledge to help them gain confidence to participate in sport.

Example Personal Statement – Sport Science

My ambition to study a sports science related degree stems both from my fascination for sport mainly football and also my interest in the course I have followed at sixth form. BTEC Extended Diploma in Sports Development has allowed me to gain a great understanding of a variety of aspects of sport; including sports massage, coaching, anatomy and all practical aspects.

Competing at football and representing my College, county and being part of the south west elite squad, has not only shown me the importance of dedication and commitment to make a team successful but also how sport can raise self-esteem and confidence in young people, I know the experience of the importance of doing daily exercise and would like to continue this aspect in the future.

I see a degree in sports science as a stepping stone to a sports related career, possibly teaching or being a personal trainer or fitness instructor

Completion of the CSLA leadership award gave me an opportunity to organise and lead sporting tournaments for young children and sporting events for people older as well as younger than me, through this I planned and lead sports sessions for a variety of groups, one of the greatest accomplishments was co-ordinating a football festival for young people with special needs and learning difficulties, this required a great deal of planning, patience and good communication. I gained immense satisfaction from the learning experience and observing the enjoyment of the game and improvement of the participants. This opportunity has given me a greater understanding of the qualities and skill a good teacher requires. The festival also highlighted to me the importance of being well organised and working as a team and being able to communicate ideas effectively. I find it very rewarding to develop young talent and putting what I have learned back into the game.

Captaining both cricket and football teams have been a great honour; dealing with responsibility of representing my team, decision making and further building my confidence to managing unpredictable situations. Work experience at my school has allowed me to see how people make decisions from a variety of situations through communication and showed me what life was like as a teacher and the day to day activities which occur.

I have decided to defer my entry for one year so that during my gap year I can take the opportunity to travel and see parts of the world I have always dreamt of seeing and the different cultures and lifestyles of countries in and out of Europe.

I feel that I will be an asset to university life because of my enjoyment and love for all sports, my determination to perform to the best of my ability and to encourage others in theirs.

Example Personal Statement - Law

My interest in the study of Law has been stimulated by the prospect of working in an environment that is intellectually challenging. I feel that one of my greatest strengths is the ability to dissect an argument and tease out the important factors. I take pleasure in the task of having to draw solutions to seemingly intractable questions by the application of logic and rationality within a given set of parameters. Perhaps perversely, I actually enjoy spending time in libraries searching for information to support points that I make in academic assignments. From my research into careers in Law, these would appear to be useful qualities.

I am also attracted to Law as a degree course because it provides the opportunity of a variety of possible career pathways. Although it is unequivocally my chosen area of study, I have yet to decide whether I would like to work as a barrister or as a solicitor, or in another capacity for which a Law degree is salient. I have been a spectator on many occasions in the courtroom of the local Magistrates and County Court and this year I have arranged work experience with a solicitor's firm to gain an insight into what are perhaps the less glamorous aspects of a career in Law.

I am currently working on weekends and holidays as a waitress in a busy local country pub. This work has perhaps more relevance to a career in Law than one might think - apart from the requirement to be trustworthy and numerically competent, it is something of a performance, there is a set etiquette and I have to think on my feet when dealing with complaints!

I have developed good communication skills through my part-time work, which has also in the past included 'telecanvassing' for independent financial advisors at a nationwide level. Among others, in-depth knowledge of mortgages, loans, investments, and bankruptcy were necessary for this. As well as enjoying the challenge of having to learn this information during a short training period, I also think it will prove extremely useful background for my legal studies in the future. In addition to my paid employment, I have gained fulfilling experience from voluntary work helping disabled children learn to swim.

I have been an active member on the School Council Committee for the past two years. During this time I feel I have had a positive effect on the lives of fellow students through successful campaigning for issues that I consider to be important; for example, enhanced student facilities, improved access to learning materials and a Basic First Aid course available to all students.

My hobbies are varied but sporting activities feature regularly in my free time. These include sailing and cross-country running, the latter of which I compete in as a representative of the school. Reading has always been a keen interest of mine and my choice of A Levels has supported this. English Literature has broadened the scope of material that I read and has developed my skills of analysis. At the same time, my Spanish A Level has encouraged me to explore foreign literature whilst Art has introduced me to works dealing with conceptual ideas.

I look forward to education beyond A Levels and feel that I am well suited to university. I believe that as well as having much to gain from completing a degree in Law, I have a lot to contribute.

Example Personal Statement - Drama & Creative Writing

I am currently studying Theatre Studies, Media Studies and English Language and Literature at A2 Level at Ivybridge Community College. I wish to study Drama and Creative Writing at a degree level as I believe this would keep my career options broad, but more importantly, I will be studying what I enjoy the most. The course for me is the best of both worlds; it would set me up for the future and is still something I enjoy immensely. My career aspirations would be definitely to work in either Theatre or the Media (Television, Radio etc) but with aspirations like this, I have to have a realistic view that not everybody gets the chance to work in the Theatre or the Media, but still I aim high to hopefully be a success in this profession. For some reason though, I've always been told by people that I should be 'on the telly', mind you, my Nan has always been very supportive of me.

I have always had a soft spot for Drama and the Theatre, I was introduced to it at the age of 11 being involved in a local pantomime, which ever since I have been involved with and still am to this day. As my skills have grown in Dramatics, because of this the society has used me as a leading role in their shows. Lately, I have played the Dame which is the result of me gaining plenty of confidence from the various shows I have been involved in, there is nothing quite like being on stage in front of 200 people, in a large dress, tights, high heels and with 44DD breasts. It's an experience that has shaped me into the person I am, and I wouldn't change it for the world. I have been involved in school performances, ranging from sombre plays for my GCSE and AS Level qualifications to larger musical shows like Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat, and other school performances of which I took an off-stage role in being front of house. More recently, I wrote and directed my A2 piece which enjoyed doing immensely.

Creative Writing is a fairly recent discovery that I found after taking my GCSEs. My main passions in this subject lie mainly in writing for theatre and writing about life in general. However, I do enjoy certain aspects of reviewing, be it theatre, cars, food, all of which are hobbies or interests of mine. So much so in fact, I am currently involved in a Young Reviewer's Scheme at my local theatre, Theatre Royal, Plymouth. This involved a rigorous application process with a background of me and my interests. My application was accepted and I am to review Mozart's opera Don Giovanni. For this I have to submit the review within 24 hours of viewing the show, so it tests me as a writer in nearly every aspect. This should be a great experience for me, not only for the viewing of the show itself, but mainly writing for a deadline as I believe this will prove my skills as a writer, as I believe I can work under pressure. Also, I like to write comedy sketches with a friend of mine, some are actually funny yet they are usually more random than a bag of cats tied to a bin.

I'd like to be an active student at university, in my College I have been employed as a Meal Time Assistant and I am a vocal member of the College Council, which organises different events around the College like fancy dress fundraisers, Anti Bullying Week and it enables Student Voice within College. I have also been a mentor for students starting in Year 7, and because all of this, it has made me a well-known face in and outside of College. I think I am perceived as quite a character albeit slightly eccentric, probably also why I am a familiar face around College.

At the current moment, I wish to take these subjects on further and not only progress in my studies, but progress in myself and craft myself into a better student and I believe that this course would undeniably do this for me. I most definitely want change, I want to get out in the big wide world and explore it for myself, and find new inspiration for creativity in a different setting from that I have been brought up in.

Example Personal Statement - Physiotherapy

As a typical child, I didn't like difficult tasks. The slightest thought of hard work, effort or pain whether it was a long run or a challenging Maths question, I simply detested. Although this improved with age, it wasn't until I was 14 that I had changed my outlook on life. This came with the help of a famous quote being shouted at me during a grueling track session, "Aim for the sky and you'll reach the ceiling. Aim for the ceiling and you'll stay on the floor" (Shankly). This I feel has matured me into the determined, positive and ambitious person I am today. Now I refuse to give up!

Despite suffering with an injury resulting from poor biomechanics for the past two years, the quote has driven me to want to get back to my passion of middle distance running. Initially not knowing the cause of the injury, I spent many appointments with various doctors, surgeons and physiotherapists trying to find a diagnosis. It was the unknowing that made me want to study Physiotherapy at degree level. Seeing the posters about the anatomy of a body at hospitals and being spoken to about my biomechanics, intrigued me as to how the body worked. Using my knowledge from PE and that gained from the practitioners, I would research possible causes for my pain. I look forward to my Physiotherapy sessions as it allows me to ask extensive questions, fuelling my interest in the subject.

Since becoming interested in the subject, I have researched what the course involves and was intrigued to find out that the treatment of conditions in areas such as neurology, orthopedic rehab and respiratory care is involved. Upon discovering this, I have applied for work experience at the trauma and rehab department of Mount Gould Hospital, a local care home, doctors' surgery and a sports physiotherapist, all of which, I am hopeful will provide me with the experience and knowledge of the different areas involved in physiotherapy and emphasises my commitment to achieving a goal.

Currently in my final A Level year, studying Biology, PE and IT I believe these subjects along with the skills achieved through my part-time job have moulded me into a suitable candidate. Biology has given me the experience of logical problem solving when completing complex practical experiments and allowed me to apply my practical knowledge to help write an evaluative piece and rectify any errors identified. Within IT, I have learned to maintain a good level of organisation and time management which is important when required to meet deadlines. I have also understood from this subject the need to ask questions if in doubt or require help, this I feel is a vital skill to have as a student as it shows confidence. PE has been an asset to my development of team building, writing complex essay-style answers and speaking publicly. It has also contributed to my understanding of the body.

Working as a receptionist for a local gym has improved upon skills such as communication, team work and management. As the job involves sales, I have applied my knowledge of health to entice potential members helping improve my communication skills. Alongside working, I am a keen athlete where I train as part of a group. This sporting exposure has allowed me to understand the importance of self-discipline and focus. I have also led sessions during training which improved my management skills and patience. Through athletics, I became South West Indoor and Devon County Champion and have competed at national events. I plan to defer my entry as I intend to complete a sports massage, reflexology and personal training course. From this I hope to widen my knowledge aiding me when completing the course and with future aspirations. Post course, I aspire to work for the NHS within the different fields to gain further experience before considering specialising in a certain field where I hope to be recognised as a good diagnostician and physiotherapist as a result of a good education and clear drive to succeed.

Example Personal Statement - Marine Science

I have always been fascinated by marine life, partly through having lived in Devon by the coast all my life, and through spending hours on the beach playing in rock pools as a child. Combined with this interest is my enjoyment of the outdoors, for example, I was riding horses probably before I learnt to walk and I still ride whenever possible. I participated in the 1997 Ten Tors expedition in which my team came ninth out of over a hundred. During the summer, I also love to travel down to Cornwall with my friends to go body-boarding. In addition to this, I have recently developed a passion for sailing and do so as often as possible with my uncle who owns a small boat moored in Plymouth. All of these activities are an extension of my affinity for the sea.

I am currently studying A Levels in Chemistry, Biology and Geography which suits my personality as I am very scientifically minded. I like to be fully aware of the world around me and how it functions. For example, the idea of there being an entire world existing under the sea, much of which is yet to be discovered, really takes my breath away. The biological side of the course will be my primary interest, which will be helped immensely by my knowledge gained at A Level. The geographical experience from my A Level course will enable me to gain an even fuller understanding of the habitats of marine life and give me the chance to travel with my work. The chemical side of my A Level studies will help with the greater detail of the course when in-depth scientific reasons are required to analyse a particular problem.

However, my interests do expand beyond science. I enjoyed music in the lower school and played the clarinet for three and a half years. I passed both grade 2 and 3 exams and played in the College wind band for a time. I also played the part of a 'Chinese Laundry Worker' in the College production of Bugsy Malone in 1998, not a major role but a lot of fun all the same!

One of my biggest dreams is to travel. October 1999, I went on a school trip to Italy where we visited Florence, Sienna and Rome, a memorable experience which I thoroughly enjoyed. I am also looking forward to the American exchange trip I will participate in during October 2000, when I will travel to Denver, Colorado and attend Eaglecrest High School for a number of days.

I am currently working as a waitress at a small, private, local hotel. I really enjoy this job as the working atmosphere is informal and everyone is very friendly. I have also completed a week of work experience at a nearby veterinary practice which, although it was not the profession I wish to follow, was definitely a worth-while experience. I have lived on a farm for most of my life so I was most suited to spending the week in wellies!

During the long summer between completing my A Levels and attending university, I plan to make good use of my time. An ambition of mine has always been to carry out a diving course something I am sure will be of benefit in my university course and, following this, my career. In addition to this, I will travel over to Sweden to visit my father for a short holiday before settling back down to a regular working routine.

After university, my main ambition is to work abroad, ideally on a coral reef somewhere exotic but failing this, a research position in England will be a more realistic alternative and I am sure equally rewarding!

Example Personal Statement - English

At present I am studying English Literature, French, Psychology and Music at A Level and hope to further my study of English Literature alongside Philosophy at university.

In addition to a great appetite for reading, I sincerely enjoy exploring, analysing, and discussing the novel, poetry, and drama. I frequently find myself reading around authors or poets to enhance my understanding and appreciation of their work. A Level English Literature has introduced me to a higher level of self-study and thus I believe myself to be more disciplined and motivated to take on challenges outside of the lesson. Throughout the course I have enjoyed all aspects of the Literature we have focused upon, ranging from the study of Shakespeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing', to an in-depth study analysis of the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes.

In my study of A Level French I have become most interested in the literature side of the course. This has broadened my view of literature further and I have been able to apply skills gained in English Literature to approach foreign literature. I have particularly enjoyed Albert Camus' 'L'Etranger' and Jean Anouilh's play 'Antigone'. In addition, I have found it very interesting to study the ideas explored and the approach used in French cinema, particularly within such films as 'Nikita' and 'Diva'. Overall, I think I would be well suited to the study of English Literature at degree level as I greatly enjoy the study of all literature. Furthermore, it would give me the opportunity to study such literature to a higher level and further develop my written and aural expression.

The desire to study Philosophy alongside English Literature has developed from all areas of my A Level courses. My initial interest in philosophical ideas began when reading Camus' 'L' Etranger' as previously mentioned, and I proceeded to read into the subject of existentialism. Moreover, the study of the metaphysical poets such as John Donne continued to enhance my interest in the subject. In addition to such literature, A Level Psychology continually introduces philosophical ideas and theories, and they continue to be extremely interesting. Understanding the need to introduce myself further to the subject before applying, I have read Bertrand Russell's 'Problems of Philosophy' and although admittedly I find some aspects baffling, I have enjoyed the challenge of exploring the ideas within it. I also aim to read some works of Plato, Descartes, Hume, and Kant in the near future.

Outside of study, I have completed the Duke of Edinburgh's award to Bronze level, and have performed in many dance and drama school productions. I feel these have made me more assertive and confident as a person. I have most predominantly been involved in music and have achieved ABRSM Grade 8 distinction on both flute and saxophone, and have passed ABRSM Grade 7 piano. I have been an active member of a number of school ensembles, as well Devon Youth Wind Orchestra and look forward to taking part in musical life at university. I also use my musical experience to give flute tuition to students at a local primary school. I particularly enjoy this as it enhances personal qualities such as responsibility and communication, and has enabled me to strengthen my musical ability. In addition to music, I enjoy spending free time with friends, and living close to the coast, I have developed enthusiasm for water sports.

I look forward to taking an active role in university life and I feel I would benefit greatly from and enjoy immensely a course in English Literature and Philosophy. Although I am as yet undecided as to my career path, I believe I will gain invaluable transferable skills and at the same time have the opportunity to study subjects that greatly interest me.

Example Personal Statement - Physics

The desire for explanation of the physical universe using mathematical equations, buoyed by the constant potential for discovery, underpins the physicist's rationale. The thought of playing even the smallest part in this excites and motivates me, and I relish the prospect of focusing my studies on a Physics degree course.

Having always enjoyed Maths – I recently led my team to victory in my College's Maths Challenge – I endorse the view that maths is the language of Physics, and look forward to developing my skills at a higher level. In addition to the Physics curriculum I have grasped the opportunity to write my Extended Essay in Physics entitled, 'How difficult is it to manipulate a particle beam and form accurate circles using a fine beam tube and Helmholtz coils?' This has enabled me to link an interest already generated in class on the centripetal acceleration of particles with my further reading on Helmholtz equations and magnetic fields. This chance to be a physicist has only heightened my determination to pursue a life in Physics.

Undoubtedly television has made Physics more accessible. I have enjoyed many of the programmes that have brought it into popular culture, whilst also reading a variety of books such as 'A Brief History of Time' and 'In Search of Schroedinger's Cat'. Such works have whetted by appetite for quantum physics and relativity. Currently I have a keen interest in particle physics, intensified by my visit to CERN and the LHC. Fortunately for me, if not for the scientists there, the ALICE detector was undergoing maintenance and I was able to see inside it while the magnets were open; a sight many physicists may never witness.

As physicists we also have to exist outside the laboratory and be able to convey our ideas to a wider audience; we become philosophers, historians and publicists. In choosing to study the International Baccalaureate I have been able to hone my skills of analysis, critical thought and communication through my standard level subjects. My decision to study French reflects my desire to be able to study physics in the international community. Earlier this year I was chosen as one of a team to represent the UK at Euroscola 2010 in Strasbourg, where I addressed over 500 students from across the EU in French; a daunting but satisfying challenge. An ability to present orally as well as in writing will, I am sure, be an invaluable asset on a Physics degree course. In addition, the Theory of Knowledge (ToK) course has enabled me to explore the inextricable links between physics and philosophy in my ToK essay. This will explore the development of theories in science and how we rely on the coexistence of theories which mathematically do not agree with one another, such as Newtonian mechanics and Einstein's theories of relativity.

I have been a committed weekly helper with a Beaver Scout pack for the last four years and have realised that although we begin to question our surroundings as young children, it is not until we mature that we realise the need to seek actively the answers. As a player of Ultimate Frisbee and rugby I understand the importance of balancing personal satisfaction with team effort. I enjoy playing the piano – I shall take Grade 8 next summer – and I am also the bass guitarist in a rock band that performs at local events. Playing a principal role in the College production of 'Joseph' this term, I have proved that physicists can sing and dance too!

To have the chance to study Physics at such an immensely exciting time, as an undergraduate and hopefully beyond, would be both a privilege and the realisation of an ambition. I firmly believe that in our attempts to unravel the mysteries of the universe we create ever more questions. As physicists, far from being daunted by this, the prospect enthalls us; the answer is only the beginning as we 'follow knowledge like a sinking star, beyond the utmost bound of human thought'. (Tennyson 'Ulysees')

Example Personal Statement - Maths

Throughout College I have always enjoyed Mathematics, but it was only in the first year of A Level that I discovered a passion for the subject, and since then I have strived to find ways to further my involvement.

When doing Maths at College, especially Further Maths, I get great satisfaction in solving the problem and in understanding the process behind the solution. Often I take extra time to derive the methods and formulae used. This process fascinates me and helps me use a range of approaches when dealing with problems. Proof is an area in Maths that I find particularly stimulating, as it permeates all the Maths I have studied. Through the process of proof you gain not only satisfaction in its successful completion but a better knowledge of the particular piece of Maths you are considering. Scientific proofs that I have encountered in Physics and other branches of science rely on observation and perception and contain a certain amount of approximation, hence there is always an element of doubt. The same cannot be said for mathematical proofs, where once something is proved it is absolute and becomes undeniable. This is why I find studying Mathematics so interesting; unlike any other scientific field, everything built from the basic mathematical axioms can be rationalised and understood. Despite the fact that Maths is, in essence, abstract I am enthralled by the way it can be applied in the physical world. From studying Physics and Applied Mathematics I have come to appreciate the way Maths can be used to rationalise, understand and even predict physical phenomena.

As a consequence of my newly discovered enthusiasm for the subject, this year I have opted to take Further Mathematics at AS Level. This has revealed new approaches to the subject, and has exposed new levels of complexity in the Maths studied at A2. Since September I have also been studying for the STEP qualification, which I have found challenging but immensely interesting and enjoyable. Although the mathematical knowledge involved is equivalent to that required at A Level, STEP requires lateral thinking and a more intuitive approach to each problem. Previous to A Level, I have enjoyed studying a range of subjects, but have always been particularly enthused by languages and music. As well as studying French and Spanish at GCSE, I studied Italian outside normal lessons in Year 8 and 9 and took the exam early, achieving a high grade. Although I have not continued the formal study of languages, I am now reasonably fluent in Italian. I have always had a passion for music, something I have now continued to study outside of College. This year I am working towards my grade 8 in bass guitar as well as playing in jazz bands inside and outside of College. This high level involvement in music draws on many of the skills used in Mathematics, as they both require an understanding of patterns, sequences and ratios.

Over the last few years I have developed an interest in computer programming, which is heavily Maths based. I enjoy the problem solving and the challenge in making a program function, and find great satisfaction in applying and deriving the Maths involved. I have made a number of successful programs, including email clients and web browsers. More recently I have been working on more Maths based programming, including functions for converting a number of base x into base y and producing algorithms and logic for interpreting, factorising and solving algebraical equations. Through this interest I have gained a good knowledge of the Java programming language as well as a good grounding in C++.

I would like to study for a Masters in Mathematics and, if successful, progress to do a research degree. My recent visits to various universities have confirmed and strengthened my determination to study Maths in further education, and I am excited by the prospect of immersing myself in the complexity of the subject.

Example Personal Statement - Medicine

After being invited to 'step outside' by a drunk patient during recent work experience, I saw that medicine involves working with people, so there is always a need to expect the unexpected. The prospect of physical conflict could have dissuaded me from a medical career, however, I've held on to my excitement and enthusiasm. I could say that my motivation comes from a desire to help people but, while this is a factor, I also have a real fascination for the study of medicine and having spoken to GPs and consultants, a goal of pursuing a career as a doctor. I look forward to a course that enables me to study something as complex as the human system and have the ability to understand, diagnose and treat it. Moreover the prospect of a career with ongoing learning and skills development and a journey towards an area of specialism greatly appeals to me.

I'm an International Baccalaureate student, which allows me to study a breadth of subjects, develop independent study skills and successfully manage a hefty workload. I have Biology, Chemistry and Maths at Higher Level, supporting and extending my interest in medicine. My desire to learn more led me to select human physiology and neurobiology module options and I enjoyed applying my knowledge from medicine and drugs options in Chemistry when working in a pharmacy, GP surgery and Primary Care Addiction Service. Thus inspired, my Extended Essay is on the effects of caffeine upon visual response time. The opportunity to formulate a question, devise methodology, carry out a trial and study neuroscience from a range of literature has been one that I have greatly enjoyed. In addition I value the opportunity the IB gives me to develop my written communication and analytical skills through History and English and am pleased to continue learning a foreign language. My performance shows that I have the self-discipline to be well organised and get the most out of an academically rigorous course.

Volunteering to support bereaved children required me to be sensitive to their experiences, while appreciating the need to balance grief with playing and having fun. The wider family sought different support from me, but also needed warmth, caring and good communication. My communication skills are enhanced by my weekly involvement with a project offering social and work experience to adults with learning disability. I show patience while people take their own time to communicate and recognise the need for clarity, appropriate pace and flexibility when I explain things. This project has improved my understanding of good health being about not only an absence of physical symptoms, but also care for the whole person, their circumstance and the people around them.

I've worked in the reception of a GP surgery, shadowed GPs, practical nurses and phlebotomists, both in inner-city and rural practices and worked in a pharmacy, seeing the value of every member of the team and the process from appointment to dispensing of medication. During time in a hospital I was struck by the opportunities modern medicine offers to intervene, which have to be balanced with ethical considerations about the right thing to do for a patient. Seeing doctors weigh up these dilemmas in intensive care gave me a lot to think about. I spent the summer on a small research project with a specialist GP in substance misuse, where the complex mental and physical health needs of people with opiate dependency were clear. Overall I have a good balance of work and relaxation. I love to travel, recently to Dubai where I took a lead role in representing my College at a Model UN conference, enjoying the mix of different cultures and traditions of our hosts. I play piano in the College jazz and big bands and play the title role in an upcoming production of Joseph. I sing and play guitar in a rock band, which may not be destined for a world tour, but is an important part of my life. My passion is for good food and cooking and I have, in my opinion, a discerning palate!