

# Writing a Winning Personal Statement

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Kirk Wadsworth

Recruitment and Widening Participation

## We Are:

A campus university with a student orientated city within walking distance

Nestled between vibrant cities and unique landscapes

Well connected with excellent road, rail and airport links to the UK and beyond



# Session Outline

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1. What is a Personal Statement?
2. Writing the Personal Statement
3. Top Tips



2 x experiences / events

2 x skills required for your chosen course

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1 x gap / thing you need

## Using UCAS

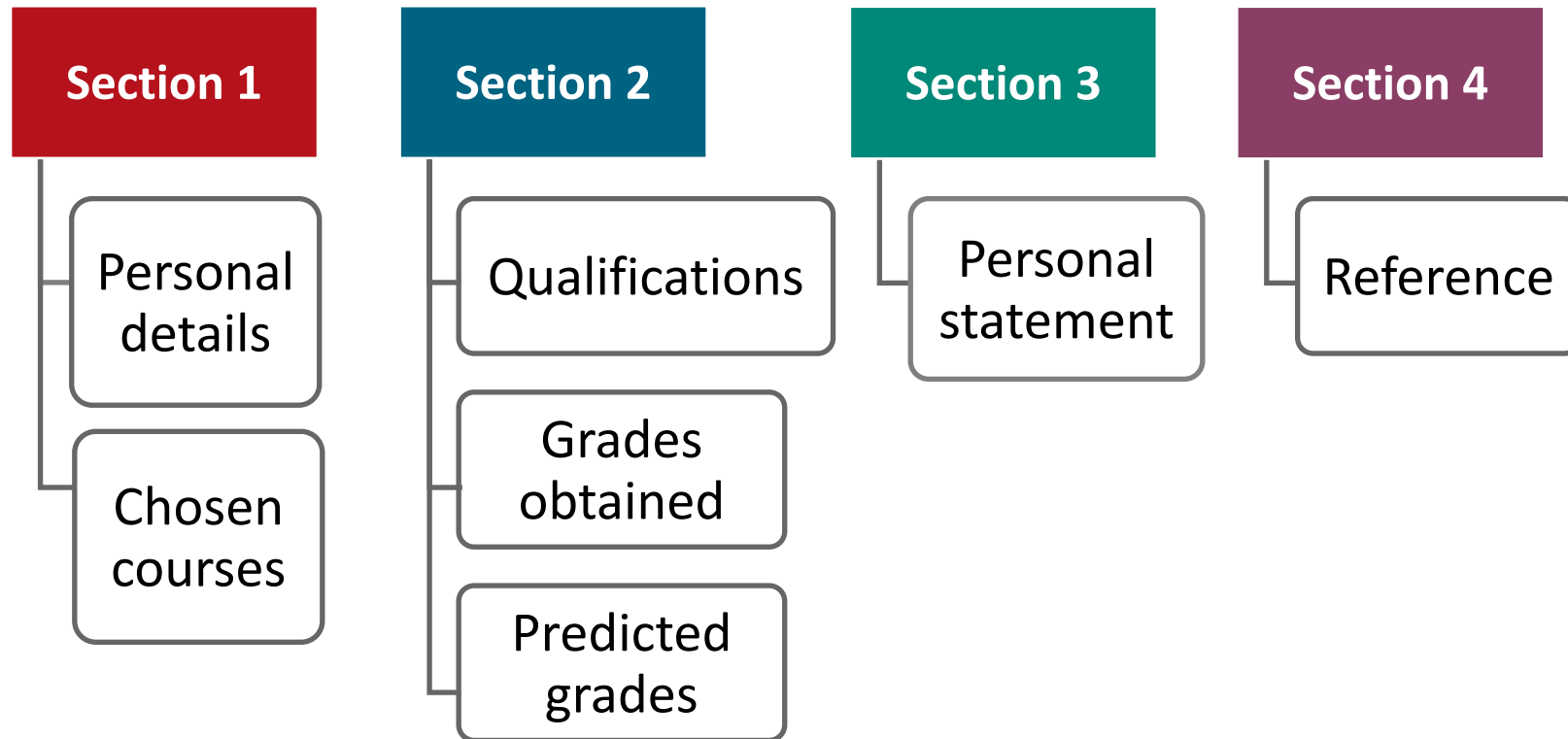
Hub – UCAS portal

Apply – send application

Track – receive and  
respond to offers



As a supporter, you don't  
need to contribute to the  
application for UCAS\*.



# What is a Personal Statement?

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# First things first...

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4,000 characters or 47 lines of text  
to show a university why they should consider you

“**Why** do you want to study this subject, and what **evidence** do you have to prove that you’re the right person for the course?”





# How are they used?

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- Providing basis for interview questions
- Evidence of motivation, commitment and authenticity
- Considering borderline cases
- A chance for universities to learn about you



# What makes a strong statement?

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- Split the focus – around 75% academic and 25% other
- Paints a clear picture to the university of the type of student you will be
- Explores your drive to study a certain course





# What are Admissions teams looking for?

- Universities want to fill their places with keen students
- Motivation (evidenced)
- Genuine interest and understanding of the course you are applying for
- Your skillset



# Writing the Personal Statement

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## Example structure

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1. Why do you want to study the course?
2. Academic interests
3. Work and relevant life experience, skills and achievements
4. Concluding statements



# 1. Why do you want to study the course?

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- Why does the subject interest you?
- What skills do you possess that make you the ideal student on the course?
- How do your current studies relate to your course of study?



# What are the top 5 most commonly used opening statements in a Personal Statement?



From a young age I have always been interested in.....



For as long as I can remember I have always.....



I am applying for this course because.....



I have always been interested in.....



Throughout my life I have always enjoyed.....



# Example of how to begin a personal statement

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The study of History, in particular Early Modern History, has always captivated me. I am fascinated by each period's unique characteristics and the role of individuals and cohorts in causing, delaying or completely preventing change. In the future I wish to follow my passion and commitment for this subject by pursuing a career in historical research.

# Example of how to begin a personal statement

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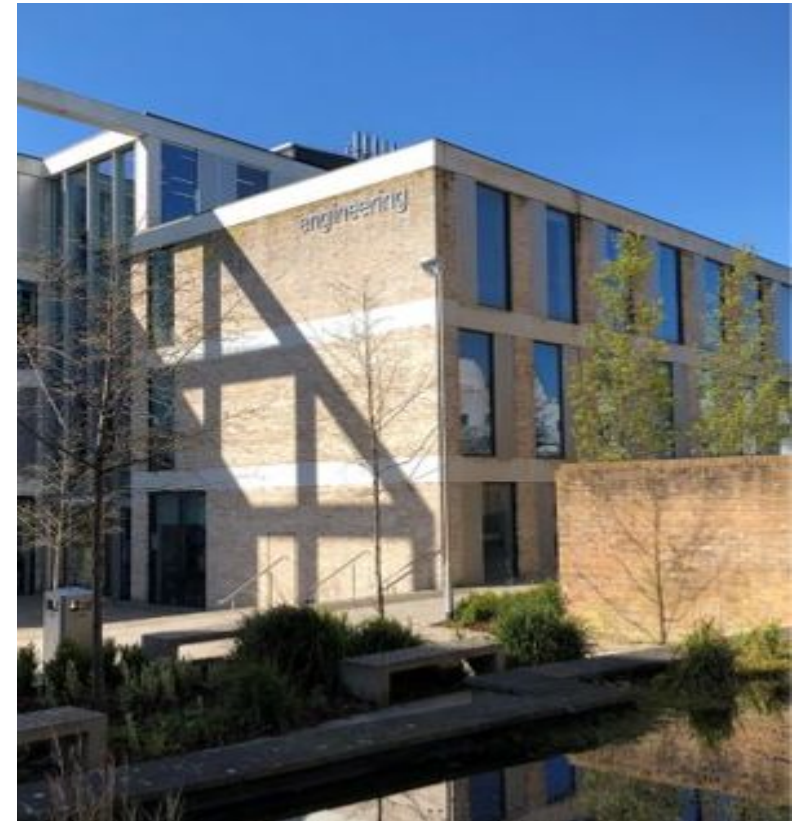


The study of History, **in particular Early Modern History, has always captivated me.** I am fascinated by **each period's unique characteristics** and the role of individuals and cohorts in causing, delaying or completely preventing change. In the future I wish to follow my **passion and commitment** for this subject by pursuing **a career in historical research.**

## 2. Academic interests

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- What have you done in school/college to develop your interest in the subject?  
(trips/books/wider reading/documentaries)
- How does your course relate to current industry affairs and developments?
- Have you done anything outside of school/college related to your academic interest?



# Example showing your interest outside of traditional studies

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As well as studying Economics at A Level, I pursue my interest in Economics independently whenever I can. For example, I am undergoing a MOOC regarding 'The Importance of Money in Business'. This is proving to be an enriching experience which is giving me greater confidence in understanding financial matters. Alongside this, I have read a book by Ha-Joon Chang called 'Economics: The User's Guide', which has contributed to broadening my knowledge of Economics. I recently submitted an entry to The RES' 'Young Economist of the Year 2021' essay competition. I decided to focus my Extended Project Qualification on whether the Government should continue to match the 2% NATO target on defence spending.

# Example showing your interest outside of traditional studies

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**As well as studying Economics at A Level,** I pursue my interest in Economics independently whenever I can. For example, I am undergoing a **MOOC** regarding 'The Importance of Money in Business'. This is proving to be an enriching experience which is giving me greater confidence in **understanding financial matters**. Alongside this, I have **read a book** by Ha-Joon Chang called 'Economics: The User's Guide' which has contributed to **broadening my knowledge** of Economics. I recently **submitted an entry to The RES** 'Young Economist of the Year 2021' essay competition. I decided to focus **my Extended Project Qualification on whether the Government should continue to match the 2% NATO target on defence spending**



# 3. Your life/work experience, skills and achievements

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- Don't include any skills or achievements you wouldn't be able to talk about
- Don't worry if you don't have any work experience in the area/field you are applying to – it isn't a requirement for all courses (remember to check!)



# Experiences to include

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- Head Boy/Girl
- Prefect
- Mentor
- School council member
- Part time work





# Experiences to include

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- Charity, fundraising, volunteering and community work
- Academic, sport and music awards
- Duke of Edinburgh
- Club supporter/helper
- Player/activist



# Transferable skills to consider

- Confidence
- Communication
- Leadership
- Organisation
- Teamwork

**Top Tip:** Pick out the best examples of how and when you gained these skills!  
Always ask yourself why are you including it





# Transferable skills to consider

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- Empathy
- Patience
- Diplomacy
- Strategising
- Curiosity

**Top Tip:** Pick out the best examples of how and when you gained these skills!  
Always ask yourself why are you including it



# Skills gained from work experience

- Position of responsibility
- Greater confidence in talking to new people
- Become more financially aware
- Reacting calmly under pressure



# Example of life/work experience, skills and achievements

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... I am the Assistant Head of the Sports Committee. This demonstrates responsibility and commitment, whilst also engaging with the scholar environment to work towards a better Sixth Form. I enjoy playing a variety of sports, representing both my school and the county. I am captain of the school football team, showing teamwork and communication skills. I am proud to be a student who is hard working, highly driven, determined, organised, and excellent at communicating and learning independently. I also excel with my numeracy skills. I have demonstrated this by becoming a peer mentor to a younger Mathematics student and I have completed a MOOC on the topic of 'Real World Calculus'. This proved to be highly beneficial in developing my numerical and problem-solving skills, and enhanced my interest...

... I am the **Assistant Head of the Sports Committee**. This demonstrates **responsibility** and **commitment**, whilst also engaging with the scholar environment to work towards a better Sixth Form. I enjoy **playing** a variety of **sports** representing both my school and the county. I am **captain of the school football team**, showing **teamwork** and **communication skills**. I am proud to be a student who is **hard working, highly driven, determined, organised, and excellent at communicating and learning independently**. I also excel with my **numeracy skills**. I have demonstrated this by becoming a **peer mentor** to a younger Mathematics student and I have completed a **MOOC** on the topic of 'Real World Calculus'. This proved to be highly beneficial in developing my **numerical and problem-solving skills**.



## 4. Concluding Statements

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Summarise:

- Why should you be offered a place on the course?
- Link your answer to the experiences and examples you have talked about in the body of your statement.
- Link your answer to any career plans – if you have them!





## Example of a concluding statement

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After studying Economics for what will be 4 years - through GCSE to A Level - and persistently performing at the top level, I am confident that I have the necessary skills and aptitude to successfully complete a degree course in Economics, and I am excited at the prospect of doing so. In the future, I aspire to become ... and a degree from your university will suitably equip me to achieve my goal.

After studying Economics **for what will be** 4 years - **through GCSE to A Level** - and persistently performing at the top level, I am **confident** that I have the **necessary skills** and aptitude to successfully complete a degree course in Economics, and I am **excited** at the prospect of doing so. In the **future**, I aspire to become ... and a degree from your university will suitably equip me to **achieve my goal**.



# Top Tips

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## Top Tips - Things to Avoid

SAVE THE SPACE! We have this information elsewhere in your application.

No explanation of why. The 'why' is the key to a good personal statement.

Make sure company names are correct. How much you are paid and which shifts you do aren't important – talk about the skills you use.

Don't right click – synonyms. It can make a statement sound disjointed/wordy.

Avoid punctuation/grammar mistakes – it's careless!

# Key take-aways:

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## Ask yourself - so what?

- *Explain* how your experiences **prepare you for your course and life as a university student**

## It's a *personal* statement

- *DO NOT PLAGIARISE*, and make each point specific to you and your experiences

## Enjoy the process

- Be creative in your planning, start drafting sections in the order that's easiest for you... find gaps in your experience, and fill them!



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Active 11m ago

**Abigail**  
Natural Sciences : MSci Hons : FCF3

Chat with Abigail

I COME FROM  
Leeds, UK

PREVIOUS STUDIES  
GCE Advanced Level (A-Level)

ABOUT ME  
I'm a 4th year Natural Scientist studying Chemistry and Nuclear Engine...

Read more about Abigail...

Active 23m ago

**Yuxin**  
Design : PhD

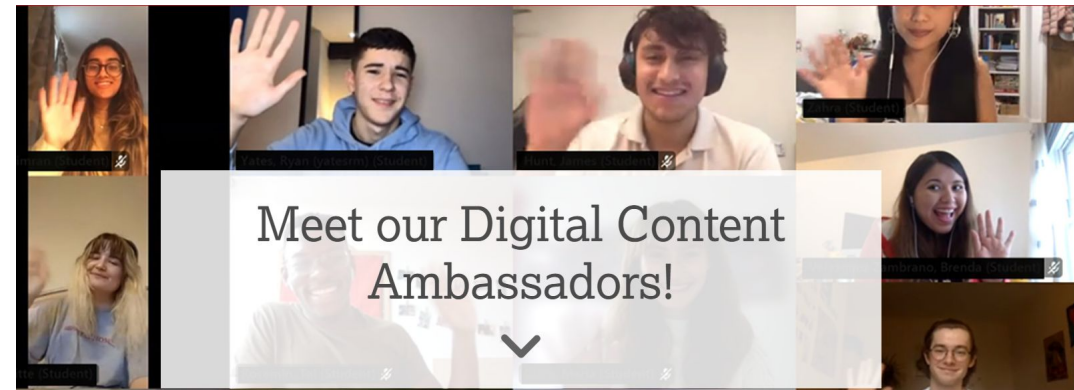
Chat with Yuxin

I COME FROM  
China

PREVIOUS STUDIES  
Art & Design

ABOUT ME  
I am Yuxin Zhao, a Chinese International student who got Master degree...

Read more about Yuxin...



Chat to a current student or staff member using the chat function on our website: [www.lancaster.ac.uk/chat](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/chat)

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