

Personal statements

Advising students and getting results

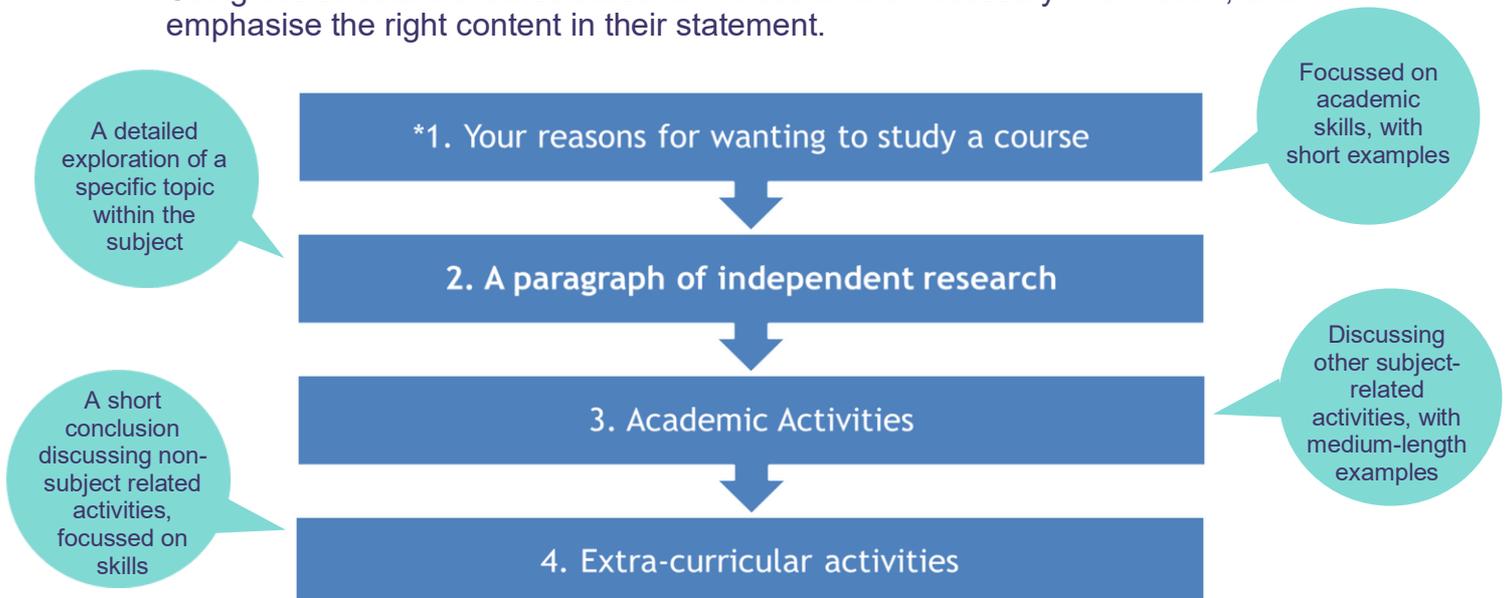
This sheet provides at-a-glance information about the most effective way to write personal statements.

Key facts

- The personal statement is an **academic document**
- It must demonstrate **specific academic skills and experience** which relate to the subject applied for
- It is **not** about demonstrating who you are as a person – just your subject ability

Structuring a personal statement

Using this structure ensures students include all the necessary information, and emphasise the right content in their statement.



1. Your reasons for wanting to study the

- Students should identify two skills **specifically relevant** to their chosen course
- They should then briefly explore a **specific example** of when they have demonstrated this skill already

Since I was a child, I have found myself to be utterly fascinated by how science works. Just glancing around the living room my eyes fall upon a host of fascinating organisms, seen and unseen they create a miniature ecosystem with billions of reactions to sit and unpick.

My main reason for wanting to study Physics is the enjoyment I get from engaging with new and complex ideas. I like studying the atomic scale and have developed an interest in quantum models which move beyond my current syllabus.

Identifies no specific skills

Uses no specific examples

Explicitly states relevant skills

Highlights a specific example

2. A paragraph of independent research

- Students should use the **FAR** structure
- Give a **Focus** – narrow the topic down to a specific interest
- Offer some **Analysis** – what are the most interesting or significant points?
- Finally, **Reflect** – what has exploring the topic taught you about the subject?

Focus: *I am particularly interested in how the principles of bioinformatics are used in detection and identification of microbes.*

Analysis: *This is used in Forensic Science for detecting bio-crime attacks and to identify and examine skeletal remains of victims after long periods of time. For example, the type of microbes present in remains can indicate the length of time the person has been dead.*

Reflection: *This demonstrates the importance of attention to detail and scientific understanding in forensic science.*

Significant points highlighted

Demonstration of technical knowledge

Short, 'signposting' opening sentence

Applies to lessons learned to the whole subject

3. Academic activities

- Students should discuss other **subject-related** activities they have completed e.g. lectures, podcasts, summer schools, work experience, reading etc.
- They should focus on specific details of the experience (a chapter, a lecture) and consider how it developed their understanding of their subject

I recently set up and completed a week-long work experience placement at a local graphic design company. The experience gave me a real insight into the graphic design industry and reinforced my desire to study the subject at university.

During work experience with a graphic design company, I was interested in the challenges of creating clear infographics. I experimented with combining different hooks with a range of typographic fonts. The most effective solution depended on creating a clear "narrative" within the image itself.

General, vague discussion

No specific example or reflection

Clear focus on one small area

Reflects on the solution they arrived at

4. Extra-curricular activities

- This is the **least important part** of the statement – it should take up no more than 25% of the character count
- Students should **briefly** identify the activity, and then immediately **focus on the general skills** it has given them e.g. teamwork, communication, time management