UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Guide for school and college students

For students applying to undergraduate study through UCAS

A practical guide to planning, drafting and checking an authentic UCAS personal statement for 2026 entry onwards.



University of Wolverhampton | Schools and Colleges guidance | Updated September 2026

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THE STRONGEST STATEMENT IS NOT THE ONE WITH THE BIGGEST WORDS. IT IS THE ONE THAT IS SPECIFIC, RELEVANT, REFLECTIVE AND TRUE.

START HERE

Your UCAS personal statement helps universities understand why you want to study your chosen subject, how your learning has prepared you and what else you have done that shows you are ready. Admissions teams read all three answers together, so aim for one clear and consistent picture of you.

The current UCAS format

Requirement	What it means
Three questions	You answer three separate questions rather than writing one continuous essay.
4,000 characters in total	The limit includes spaces and is shared across all three answers.
At least 350 characters per answer	Each question must meet this minimum. You may divide the remaining characters as your evidence requires.
One statement for all choices	Keep it relevant to the subject or closely related courses. Do not name one university unless all choices are for it.
Read as a whole	Avoid repeating the same example or point across answers.

These rules apply to undergraduate UCAS applications for 2026 entry onwards. Always check UCAS and individual course pages before submitting because requirements can change.



What makes an answer convincing

Use a simple four-part pattern whenever you introduce an example:

Step	Prompt
Claim	What interest, skill or quality are you showing?
Evidence	What exactly did you study, read, make, observe or do?
Reflection	What did you learn, notice, question or improve?
Relevance	How will this help you on the course or in the subject?

Example: "My investigation into local air quality taught me to compare sources rather than accept a single headline figure. Explaining the findings to my class strengthened my confidence with data and made me keen to study how evidence informs public policy."



QUESTION 1

Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Show an informed interest in the subject. Move beyond "I have always been interested" by explaining what has shaped your interest and what you want to explore next.

Planning prompts

- Which topic, problem or question genuinely interests you, and why?
- What have you read, watched, attended, researched or created beyond normal lessons?
- What did you think about it? Did it change or deepen your view?
- How does the course connect with your ambitions, even if your career plan is not fixed?

Strong content choices

Less convincing	More convincing
"I have always loved psychology."	"Learning about memory distortion led me to compare eyewitness evidence with research on recall. I became interested in how psychological findings are applied in legal settings."
Listing three books or podcasts	Select one or two and explain the idea, question or disagreement that stayed with you.
A famous quotation	Your own explanation of what interests you and why.

Drafting frame

Use this to start, then rewrite it naturally in your own words:

- My interest in … developed when …
- I explored this further by …
- This helped me understand / question / appreciate …
- I now want to study … because …



QUESTION 2

How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare?

Choose recent, relevant learning and show what it has taught you to do. Universities can see your grades elsewhere, so focus on subject insight, academic habits and transferable skills.

Planning prompts

- Which module, assignment, experiment, performance or practical task best connects to the course?
- What research, analysis, problem-solving, creative or communication skills did you use?
- What feedback did you act on, and how did your work improve?
- Could an EPQ, technical qualification, competition or independent project provide stronger evidence.

Strong content choices

Less convincing	More convincing
"A level history gave me many skills.""	"Comparing conflicting accounts in my coursework taught me to test provenance and recognise how interpretation shapes an argument."
Repeating predicted grades	Explain a relevant project, method, topic or academic achievement not already obvious elsewhere.
Listing every subject	Choose the two or three strongest connections and explain them.

Drafting frame

Use this to start, then rewrite it naturally in your own words:

- My interest in … developed when …
- I explored this further by …
- This helped me understand / question / appreciate …
- I now want to study … because …


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QUESTION 3

What else have you done to prepare outside education, and why is it useful?

Use work experience, employment, volunteering, outreach, hobbies or responsibilities as evidence. The value lies in your reflection, not the prestige of the activity.

Planning prompts

- What did you personally do, observe or contribute?
- What challenged or surprised you?
- Which relevant quality did you develop, and what is the evidence?
- How did the experience confirm, question or refine your course choice?

Strong content choices

Less convincing	More convincing
"Volunteering taught me teamwork."	"While supporting a community event, I adjusted how I explained tasks to different age groups. This showed me that clear communication begins with understanding the audience."
A long list of clubs	One or two examples with clear learning and course relevance.
"I was responsible for patient care" after shadowing"	"I observed how staff protected confidentiality and adapted communication"; describe your actual level of involvement accurately.

Drafting frame

Use this to start, then rewrite it naturally in your own words:

- My interest in … developed when …
- I explored this further by …
- This helped me understand / question / appreciate …
- I now want to study … because …

ACCURACY AND AUTHENTICITY

Everything in your statement should be accurate to the best of your knowledge and written in your own voice. UCAS and universities may check information, identify similarities with other statements, or ask you to discuss your examples at interview.

The evidence check

Check	How to keep it accurate
Qualifications and study	Use the correct qualification, module, project and awarding-body names. Do not claim a result you have not yet achieved; say “predicted” or “currently studying” where appropriate.
Work and volunteering	Check organisation names, dates, role titles and what you personally did. Distinguish observing from carrying out a task.
Books, podcasts and research	Only include material you actually engaged with. Check the title, author or speaker, and be ready to explain one idea you took from it.
Skills	Replace unsupported labels such as “excellent communicator” with a brief example that demonstrates the skill.
Career claims	Avoid implying that a degree automatically guarantees entry to a profession. Check professional requirements using authoritative course and
Sensitive experiences	Share only what is relevant and what you are comfortable disclosing. Focus on insight and preparation, not unnecessary personal detail.

Using AI responsibly

AI can help you brainstorm questions, organise your own notes or check readability. It should not invent experiences, opinions or achievements, and you should not copy and submit AI-generated text as your own. UCAS requires applicants to declare that the statement has not been copied or provided by another source, including AI software.

- Do not enter confidential information, personal data about someone else or unpublished assessment work into an AI tool.
- Check every factual suggestion against an authoritative source. AI can sound confident while being wrong.
- After any editing support, read the answer aloud and rewrite anything that does not sound like you.
- Keep your notes and drafts so you can show how the statement developed and prepare for interview questions.

Your final fact check

☐ I can explain every example without notes.

☐ Names, dates, titles and qualification details are correct.

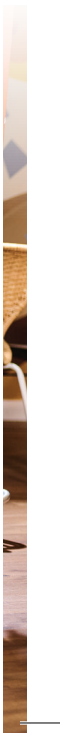
☐ I have not exaggerated my responsibilities or level of involvement.

☐ My opinions are genuinely mine and any factual claims have been checked.

☐ The wording is my own and has not been copied from examples, friends, websites or AI.

BUILD YOUR EVIDENCE BANK

Experience	What I did	What I learned	Course link
Module or project			
Reading or subject exploration			
Work or volunteering			
Activity or responsibility			



A practical drafting process

1. Research your courses. Note repeated themes, content, learning methods and any professional requirements.
2. Create an evidence bank. List study, projects, reading, work, volunteering, responsibilities and achievements.
3. Match evidence to the three questions. Use each strong example once.
4. Draft for meaning before counting characters. Be specific first, then edit.
5. Test relevance. After each example, ask “So what does this show about my readiness for this course?"
6. Check accuracy against records and authoritative sources.
7. Ask a trusted teacher, adviser or supporter for feedback on clarity and authenticity.
8. Proofread from the UCAS preview, check the character count and retain a final copy.

Final submission checklist

- ☐ Each answer is at least 350 characters.
- ☐ The combined total is no more than 4,000 characters including spaces.
- ☐ I have answered all three questionsdirectly.
- ☐ The statement works for every course choice.
- ☐ My strongest subject evidence is prominent.
- ☐ I explain what I learned rather than only listing activities.
- ☐ I have removed repetition, clichés and unsupported claims.
- ☐ Spelling, punctuation and course terminology are correct.
- ☐ The content is truthful, personal and written in my voice.
- ☐ I have saved a copy and can discuss every example at interview.



SOURCES AND FURTHER SUPPORT

This guide reflects UCAS guidance available in September 2026. Check the live pages before use at: ucas.com/personalstatement

UCAS subject-specific personal statement guides:

UCAS, How to write your personal statement for 2026 entry onwards:

UCAS, A guide to using AI and ChatGPT with your personal statement:

For course-specific entry requirements and advice, use the official university course page and contact the admissions team if anything is unclear.

