



Applying to University - advice on writing effective personal statements

Whether you are applying for an undergraduate or a Master's degree, your personal statement is an important part of your application - it's also the most difficult! Other than your academic and language qualifications, it's the way that universities can assess your background and your motivation.

As an IFG student, we will give you individual help in applying for universities, advising you on different universities and courses. We will also give you guidance on your personal statement. However, it is a **personal** statement so it must be unique to you and requires some careful thought and planning.

Three of the most important things to include are:

- **why you're applying for the course you've chosen:** this is particularly important when you're applying for a subject that you have not studied before. Tell the university the reasons why that subject interests you, and include evidence that you understand what's required to study the course. It helps here to do your research and learn more about the course.
- **why you're suitable for the course:** tell the universities about your past and current studies, and how they have helped you to prepare for the degree course you have chosen
- **Include information about other activities or achievements.** These may be, for example, sport, dancing, acting activities, being part of a debating society - there are plenty of other possibilities as well. You might think that playing for a football team has got nothing to do with the degree you have chosen. But think about what this activity has helped you to develop - better teamworking skills, communication skills, self-discipline, time management.

You might also include things which you are proud to have achieved such as taking part in a particular project, being given a position of responsibility at school or elsewhere, or an award which you have been given.

Your statement will be more convincing and personal if you write about why an experience, activity or interest makes you a good candidate for the course. Include enough additional information to make it interesting and to demonstrate your own interest. Rather than making a statement such as

'I enjoy badminton'

try to provide context and show what you have learnt

'I play badminton twice a week with a club that plays in local competitions and I play in both singles and doubles matches. Doubles matches require good team working, an ability to support your partner, to devise a game plan but be able to adapt it as required and fast reactions. I enjoy the social side of the club and take responsibility for organising the social activities and fundraising events. This gives me an opportunity to develop my organisational and planning skills. Fitting in all these activities while keeping up with my academic studies demands good time management and I think I do that very well.'

Work or Volunteering Experience

If you have any work or voluntary experience, then mention this. It's not essential but, if you have this experience, then it will be good to write about it.

if you have worked, then 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 mentioned in the Entry Profiles. For example, rather than just saying:

'I spent two weeks working at a department store. I enjoyed speaking to customers and helping them with their enquiries'

you could say:

'I spent two weeks managing customer enquiries at a department store. I learnt how to interact with customers and handle complaints. The experience highlighted the importance of positive communication between a business and its customers, and taught me how to manage difficult enquiries effectively. I would like to develop this skill further by studying a degree in public relations.'

Applying as an international student

Use the personal statement to tell universities why you want to study in the UK. Also try to answer these questions in your statement:

- Why do you want to study in the UK?
- Show how your Foundation or Pre-Masters studies are helping to prepare you for university
- Have you taken part in any activities where you have used English outside of your studies?

Future Career Plans

You probably don't have an exact idea of the career you want to pursue after university, but it helps to show that you have thought about it. Possible reasons for a career choice could be

linked to your passion for a particular subject, you may want to experience working in different countries, or you think that a career might have specific opportunities linked to the country you come from. So just add something to show that you have thought about your future plans.

Undergraduate and postgraduate applications

Most applications for first degrees are made through UCAS, an organisation which coordinates applications to UK universities. If you apply through UCAS, then you can make up to five choices of universities on one online application form. IFG will guide you through this process. For applications through UCAS, there is a maximum length to the personal statement of about 550 words.

Most applications for masters courses are made directly to the university. Therefore, you might make three or four separate applications. The length of your personal statement for masters courses will usually be a little longer than for first degrees, and will include reasons why you have chosen the particular university you are applying to. Again, IFG will give you comprehensive, one to one guidance on applications for masters courses.