

# Applying to University

UCAS and Personal Statements

US

University of Sussex



**Move, enjoy, study, work, fun, challenge, live, belong**

# What, why, how and...

**What:** UCAS: handles apps for all full-time first degree HE courses  
(million and a half apps for 40,000 courses at 325 institutions)

**Why:** Saves time for colleges AND you; aids good practice

**How:** Single application form giving five choices; APPLY online



# ...When?

- June to Sept
  - 15<sup>th</sup> October
  - 15<sup>th</sup> January
  - Nov to March
  - Jan to April
  - End of April
  - August
  - October
- **Research** & Shortlist
  - Deadline for Med, Dent, Vet Science & Oxbridge
  - Deadline for most other degrees
  - Decisions made (including interviews)
  - Admissions Days
  - Decision time on where to accept
  - Confirmation & Clearing
  - Start of the academic year





## The key areas of the application form are:

***Qualifications:*** both those taken and those pending

***Personal Statement:*** Interest in, commitment to, and understanding of your chosen discipline

***Evidence of relevant experience*** (if appropriate)

***Reference:*** Your teacher/tutor's opportunity to talk about your suitability to the course/university

# What Makes a Successful Application?

- Grades
- Well rounded student
- Active inside and outside the classroom
- Voluntary work
- Evidences skills and qualities
- Relates skills and qualities to the degree



# What are we looking for?

There is no set formula for a perfect applicant  
**Everything** is (generally) taken into consideration

Academic ability

Intellectual curiosity & understanding the course

Extra curricular activity

Work experience

References

# Things to consider When choosing the university/course



Rankings – ALL types!

Reputation and specialist research areas

Entry tests (LNAT, BMAT, UKCAT, HAT, Oxbridge specific)

Interviews

Emphasis put on PS and references

Points, grades, flexibility, A\*, GCSEs

Extra curricular availability

Location/campus/size

Cont...

# Things to consider When choosing the university/course



Bursaries and scholarships

Links with industry/work placements

Employability

Resits

‘Soft’ subjects

Course structure and learning

Optional extras (majors/minors, field trips)

**The timing of your application**

# Good grades are NOT enough

**Your grades are important,**

**But the *personal* statement is what sets you aside from everyone else:**

**Your PS is what makes you different to someone else who may have the same qualifications**

(This is your first and often only impression on the university, so make it count!)

# The Facts

- You have 4,000 characters (47 lines) to make yourself stand out
- There is no standard style for a personal statement
- Everyone is different, so every personal statement is, too
- Admissions staff will read up to a hundred PER DAY
- You are judged on everything from style to spelling, relevance to enthusiasm
- YOUR personal statement should be about YOU, YOUR passions, YOUR aspirations and YOUR experiences

# Things to include

**Although not exhaustive, you should think about the following:**

- What course do you want to study?
- What interests you about it?
- How well suited are you to the subject?
- How are your current studies related to the course?
- Are you conscientious, hardworking and committed?
- How will you show enthusiasm for the course?
- What hobbies, Do you have any career plans that are related?
- Experiences and interests do you have and how are they related?



# How do I start it? Politics...

‘At university I want to study politics’

‘They say money makes the world go round, so if politicians control our budgets, do they rule the world?’

‘Stalin, Hitler, Thatcher, Marx, Blair – all, allegedly, were politicians.’

‘Whether we like, or even realise it, politics influences the entire world. If we want an opinion on it, I believe we have a responsibility to understand it.’

‘My passion for politics began when...’

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Roosevelt realised in order to make change, you have to try...’

# Things to remember

- **DOs**

- **Do** remember this is a **personal** statement
- **Do** discuss with your teachers, friends and family how you can improve your PS
- **Do** describe your experiences and what they represent (summer schools, work experience etc)
- **Do** give reasons for your choices rather than just enjoying the subject
- **Do** make links between your choices, your hobbies and your aspirations
- **Do** use examples of your skills and qualities and landmark events
- **Do** be concise and structured
- **Do** be creative and interesting

- **DON'Ts**

- **Don't** plagiarise, generalise, exaggerate or lie!
- **Don't** rely upon your first draft – work and rework!
- **Don't** mention the university specifically
- **Don't** rely on MS spellchecker
- **Don't** just list your achievements without using examples of their benefits
- **Don't** refer to pre-GCSE experience
- **Don't** discuss problems that may affect your ability to stay the course
- **Don't** repeat yourself, waffle or use irrelevant information

- There is no formal structure for a personal statement, but generally...
  - 70/30 split between the course and why you have chosen it

And

- Information about yourself and your abilities
- Example structure:
  - P1: Subject intro, how I made my decision and my interests in the subject
  - P2: What other related stuff I've done and my career aspirations
  - P3: Skills and qualities I have related to the course, using examples
  - P4: Other information about me interests hobbies etc (try to relate them to the subject and the skills you have)
  - P5: Conclusion. Sum up what I have to offer and why I should be chosen

# Main Points To Take Away From Today...



- 1) Make sure you **understand** the course or area you're applying for.
- 2) Describe what **interests** you have in the subject area – show the tutors you like their subject too!
- 3) Explain what **experience** you have had of the subject area.
- 4) Start on a **positive** and **uplifting** note and show **enthusiasm**.
- 5) Don't mention one specific University - you are applying to 5 different places.

# And.....ADVICE!

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Perhaps make a **list** of all the skills wanted for the courses you are applying for to find the **common skills** required. Talk to **friends!**

Think about what **you** have done in the past – socially and academically– that have **involved** the necessary skills.

Then talk about those points/events and say what you **did**, what you **learnt** and how it **relates** to the course and your **desire** to study the area further.

*Conclude positively; **if you are the right candidate – make them see it!***

# Post application

## What to expect

- Each university makes an individual decision on your application
- You may receive interview invites or news from the universities
- Reply times vary for many reasons
- UCAS sends official news of each decision as they happen (check 'Track')
- Applicant accepts one firm and one insurance offer
- Opportunity to apply for accommodation, bursaries/scholarships etc
- No offers? Enter Extra (apply to other universities with spaces for offers)
- Examination results published
- Automatically accepted or entered for Clearing (ringing around for spaces)

# And remember...

If a university turns you down at application stage – and your application really is the best it can be – don't be disappointed.

The best university for you is the one that will recognise your qualities and give you the chance to improve.

*If you knew it all, you wouldn't need to go!*



# Contact

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