

UCAS Personal Statement Guidance - 2026

What is a personal statement?

It's an important part of the UCAS application process as it's an opportunity for you to talk about yourself and your passions, outside of your grades. Your personal statement is a chance to get noticed for the unique talents and experiences you have.

The UCAS personal statement for 2026 has three separate questions that you need to answer.

Each answer will have a minimum character count of 350 characters (including spaces, full stops etc). (You can write 4,000 characters total).

What universities and colleges are looking for

When reading your personal statement, admissions tutors are looking for evidence that you're passionate and knowledgeable about the subject area you're looking to study further and have the relevant skills, experiences, and potential to be a great student.

What are the personal statement questions?

Question 1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Question 2: How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

Question 3: What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

The personal statement questions in more depth:

Question 1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

This is your opportunity to showcase your passion and knowledge of your chosen subject area and to demonstrate why it's a good fit for you and your future ambitions.

Examples of what you might talk about here are:

Your motivations for studying this course(s)	Have you been inspired by a key role model or moment in your life? Maybe it's a subject you love and want to pursue further. We're all driven by something and it's important to talk about how yours has led you to this course or subject area.
---	---

Your knowledge of this subject area and interests	Perhaps there's a particular subject area you've researched and can't wait to learn more about. A book or subject expert doing great things that have sparked your interest? Universities want to see you have done your research so they can be confident this is something you will enjoy and excel in. This is a great place to highlight super-curricular activities as evidence of curiosity and interest in the subject outside of the classroom.
Your future plans and why this is a good fit for you	If you already have a particular profession in mind you could talk about how you'll use this to launch your career. If you don't, think about what's important to you and your future, and how the knowledge gained from your chosen course(s) will help you achieve this.

Question 2: How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

This is your chance to shout about the relevant or transferable skills you've gained from your formal education and highlight your understanding of how they will help you succeed in this subject area.

Examples of what you might talk about here are:

How your studies or training relate to your chosen course(s) or subject area	This could be current or previous studies within a school, college, training provider, or even a short online university course – any form of formal education. The main thing here is to focus on what's most recent and relevant to your chosen course(s). If you are no longer in full-time education, use section three to talk about your experiences since leaving.
What relevant or transferable skills you have that make you a great candidate	Maybe there are a couple of subjects that have helped you develop a core set of skills required for your chosen course(s). Or, a particular module that helped you understand where your interests and strengths lie.
Any relevant educational achievements	Universities and colleges will see your grades elsewhere on your application so don't waste time talking about these. Consider accomplishments like winning a school or national competition, serving as a student ambassador or team captain, or landing the lead role in a play.

Question 3: What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

This is your chance to talk about any other activities you have undertaken outside of your formal education or personal experiences which further demonstrate your suitability for the course. This section is likely to be highly personal to you and anything you do include should reflect on why you're including it.

Examples of what you might talk about here are:

Work experience, employment, or volunteering	Whether it's in-person work experience or virtual work experience, or volunteering at a dog shelter(!), the key thing here is for you to reflect on your experiences and the skills gained relevant to your chosen course
Personal life experiences or responsibilities	Is there a situation you've personally overcome that has influenced your decision? Are there responsibilities such as caring for a family member that has helped you develop essential qualities for the course like resilience and empathy
Hobbies and any extracurricular or outreach activities	Think sports, reading, community work, summer schools – any activities outside of your studies that help further showcase why you'd make a great student.
Achievements outside of school or college	This could be a position of responsibility such as captain for your local club, a musical achievement, competition you won, or a qualification you've attained outside of the classroom.
Post-education activities	If you're no longer in full-time education, it's a good idea to detail what you've been doing since and how this has equipped you with the skills and qualities for your desired course(s).

Personal statement and AI. Is using AI to help with my personal statement 'cheating'?

The advice from UCAS is:

Generating (and then copying, pasting and submitting) all or a large part of your personal statement from an AI tool such as ChatGPT, and presenting it as your own words, could be considered cheating by universities and could affect your chances of an offer.

When you complete your application, you now have to declare that your personal statement hasn't been copied or provided from another source, including artificial intelligence software.

The UCAS verification team run checks to detect fraudulent applications and patterns of similarity in personal statements. If UCAS software detects elements of a personal statement that are similar to others, the universities or colleges it is intended for may be notified.

General tips on writing a personal statement:

- Ensure you've researched the course content – very important
- Check your spelling, grammar, and punctuation
- Be enthusiastic
- Use your own vocabulary
- Avoid repetition
- It is fine to say that you're interested in more than one course if they're quite closely related

- “Inspirational quotes” are not always liked. University admissions tutors would rather hear about what has inspired you
- Be careful if you’re making a joke, the reader might not always share your sense of humour!
- Mention any personal circumstances that may have affected your education performance or choice of subjects
- Ask people you trust to read your statement and give feedback
- Check your spelling, grammar and punctuation (again!)
- Do it in word first and then copy over to the UCAS site when it’s finalised
- Remember the limit is 4,000 characters total which is about 47 lines

DO NOT:

- Lie or exaggerate. You may be caught out at interview
- Leave it to the last minute. If you do it will probably be obvious that you have rushed it
- Mention individual universities
- Copy someone else’s. UCAS have technology to check this.

Useful resources:

<https://www.ucas.com/applying/applying-to-university/writing-your-personal-statement/the-new-personal-statement-for-2026>

Sarah Wood
Careers Adviser/Leader
s.wood@stanmore.ac.uk