

The UCAS Personal Statement

Glenalmond College Sixth Form

sandynorton@glenalmondcollege.co.uk

01738 842076

What is it, and why is it important to most universities?

- Your chance to impress Admissions tutors.
- The statement can be up to 4,000 characters or 47 lines.
- Universities are looking for:
 - Your knowledge of your chosen course
 - Your motivation for the course
 - Your “teachability” and likelihood of completing the course.
 - AS grades or UMS marks (?)

Why “teachability” and likely “stickability” are important

- All Universities are looking for motivation and ability. A drop out from a course means one student fee less for the University which is then reflected for that course throughout its length. So if a Department starts Term 1 with 48 students and ends at Term 9 with only 40, the cash loss is considerable. University finances have been cut over a number of years, and there really is little or no fat left in the system. They are therefore trying to select people who will remain on their course *and* graduate with a good degree.

Universities use Personal Statements to:

- Help select candidates
- Decide which candidates to interview.
- Develop lines of questioning in an interview.
- Discover whether potential candidates understand the nature of the course.
- Help decide whether to offer a place to borderline candidates when the results are published in August.

THUS, YOUR "Section 10" CAN BE VERY IMPORTANT

CONTENT – areas you should cover:

- *reasons for choosing the course,*
- *career aspirations, and relevant course experience,*
- *information concerning intellectual, social, sporting and other interests,*
- *details of any non-examined subjects being studied,*
- *reasons for deferred entry applications and Gap year plans.*

Selection of Course

- This should take up the first 60% or 70% of your statement
- Use the EP (Entry Profile) of courses in UCAS course search to obtain ideas about what to stress in your Section 10
- Your motivation could be as a result of:
 - 'A' Level interest in an area of study
 - Career aspirations
 - An academic interest that could not be nurtured at school (e.g. philosophy, engineering etc.)

Section 10 – Content (1)

- “A fascination for how the human body works” (370).
- “burning a hole in their pyjamas at the age of 8” (235).
- “an elderly and infirm grandfather” inspired my interest in medicine (175).
- Yes, you’ve guessed it – the figures in brackets correspond to the number of applicants, from a sample of 50,000 who used these exact words in their Section 10. In short.....
- DON'T USE THE INTERNET!
- 1 in 20 Oxbridge applicants were discovered to have merely copied material from the internet.
- Write something interesting and eye-catching, but compose it yourself.

Content of your Section 10

- Include:
 - Your reasons for choosing the course
 - Do you enjoy the subject **and why?**
 - Which aspects attract you the most.
 - Do you look forward to studying the subject in more depth?
 - Do you possess certain skills that might be needed for the course? e.g.
 - Working to deadlines.
 - Diplomacy
 - Problem solving skills
 - Initiative
 - Communication skills

Relevant Activities and Experience

Mention:

- Work experience or shadowing. This is **vital** for medicine/veterinary/dentistry, and important for other courses.
- Visits e.g. classics, geography trips – art galleries etc.
- Foreign exchanges
- Community service

Non examined subjects (1)

- Languages, Computing, Electronics: all show breadth of interest.
- **SPORTS**
- Only mention the highest level achieved, and any of interest outside school (skiing, sailing etc.)
- **HOBBIES/INTERESTS**
- Genuine ones only, they can be a trap at interview if they are seen to be fabricated. Do **NOT** put reading! The Admissions Tutor assumes that! **Specify** the type of books, authors, period etc. **Duke of Edinburgh** Awards always seem to impress. Travel could be a relevant issue (e.g. Rome for Ancient History; Florence for Art).

Non examined subjects (2)

■ POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- Again only put the highest level achieved: School Prefect etc. (In general take care to avoid the use of terms only understood by Glenalmond pupils).

■ GAP YEAR PLANS

- If applying for deferred entry, Gap plans are of interest and should, at some stage, have a link with the proposed course! It is vital that if more than one type of course is applied for, the candidate explains why, otherwise a lack of commitment and genuine interest may be assumed by the Admissions Tutor

Activities reflecting personal attributes:

- Patience
- Calmness under pressure
- Ability to work with others (“team player”)
- Self motivation
- Organisational skills
- Determination
- Ability to prioritise

As a starting point, 3 paragraphs

- **Paragraph 1:** Why this course?
- **Paragraph 2:** Activities, experience and skills that will be of benefit in your chosen area of study. What you are studying now and how it will give you the tools to cope with the demands of your chosen course (e.g. History: analytical and research skills – D & T: problem solving and creativity). If you are mentioning authors and books that you have read, say something specific about the texts. Do not simply list books.
- **Paragraph 3:** A section demonstrating your character, ambitions and achievements.

Examples of Content (1)

- *I am fascinated by Law, and have taken a close interest in legal cases since I visited a magistrates court with school in Year 12. I spent a number of weeks working in a solicitor's office over the summer, and have also been reading accounts of famous trials. I am particularly interested in the law of different countries and how these compare to English law. I hope ultimately to train to be a barrister.*

Examples of Content (2)

- *I took English, History and Government & Politics at AS-level, and am continuing these subjects, plus General Studies, to A-level. My choice of subjects reflects my intellectual interests in the world and has developed my skills of analysis, argument and expression to a very high level. Initially I found studying these subjects in combination very challenging, but I quickly learned to organise my time and workload, and I am very much enjoying my studies.*

Examples of Content (3)

- *I am President of my college's Debating Society and as well as improving my debating skills, I have also learned how to run a small organisation, generate enthusiasm amongst members, promote events, and work with a team of other students and staff. Despite not having a lot of previous computing experience I have also learned web authoring so that I could produce and maintain the society's web page, and make links to other societies and relevant web sites.*

Tips for progress

- Don't procrastinate – get on with drafting your Personal Statement as soon as you feel able (post AS)
- Save your drafts to the College Network
- Make sure that you set Word to English (U.K.)
- Don't repeat information that is already mentioned elsewhere on the Form e.g. GCSE results, ECDL etc.
- Don't start every sentence with "I".
- Structure each paragraph.
- Do not lie – you may be asked to expand on some imaginary reading, skill or experience at interview.
- TAKE ADVICE from A.N., subject teachers or tutors

Above all.....

- Get started as soon as you are able
- tutors will help, but they need at least some sort of draft to look at and advise upon.