

Year 13

UCAS Application and Personal Statement

Thursday 8th October 2020

1. * Student Ambassador01: Hi, my name is Sophie and I am currently in my 3rd year studying Medical Imaging. The theme for today's forum is your UCAS Application and Personal Statement. For those of you who are new to the forums, you are welcome to ask me questions either directly related to the theme or about any other aspect of university life. Anything I can't answer I will refer on and someone from the Exeter Scholars team will get back to you with a response in the next few days. For those of you that have logged on before, welcome back!

Before we start I just want to give you a quick overview of how the session itself works in case you've not used one before.

When you post a message it will be sent to me to reply to and will show on your wall as awaiting reply. When I reply to your message it will then post to the public wall for you and everyone else to see. Until I have replied, no-one else will see your message. Bear with me, as when it gets busy it will take me a few moments to reply – but don't worry, you won't have been forgotten! I will start all messages with the name of the person I am replying to just to make the discussion easier to follow and if I'm posing a question to the whole group I'll start the message with 'Everyone'.

Also answering your questions today is Thea and they will introduce themselves to you in a moment.

2. * Student Ambassador02: Hi, my name is Théa and I am currently in my third year studying BSc Business. The theme for today's forum is UCAS applications and writing your personal statement. For those of you who are new to the forums, you are welcome to ask me questions either directly related to the theme or about any other aspect of university life. I would be more than happy to answer!

3. * Student Ambassador01: I hope that all makes sense! To get us started, has anybody started writing their personal statement yet? How are you all finding it?

4. * Siobhan Harper: Hi everyone! This is Siobhan from the Exeter Scholars programme. Just to let you know – if you didn't already – that we offer a **PERSONAL STATEMENT CHECKING SERVICE** to all of our Exeter Scholars participants. If you want to use this service, please simply email your personal statement to us at exeterscholars@exeter.ac.uk, and one of the team will review it and send it back to you. There is no limit for the amount of times you can do this, and you can send it to us whatever stage of writing you're at. We hope that this will be useful for you!

5. Oliver Rose: Would you recommend using a quote in your personal statement?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Oliver, I personally wouldn't recommend using a quote as the personal statement is supposed to be about you and your thoughts rather than words that someone else has spoken. However there is no rule against this.

6. Molly Rendle: Hi, Do you have any tips on adding character to my personal statement rather than it sounding like an essay?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Molly! To add character make sure you reflect your individuality, like your interests and hobbies (link these to skills you've built). Include why you deserve to be on the course. Unfortunately they do often feel very essay like, however that is the nature as you do need to keep it professional - a tricky balance! I hope this helps. Sophie

7. Molly Ball: Hiya! What would you say the most important aspect of a personal statement?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Molly. It's really important in your personal statement to include what makes you unique and why the university should choose you! I'd recommend including relevant experience and skills, personal achievements, and extra-curriculars. I wouldn't say there's a 'most important' aspect, except for making sure it's relevant to you. Don't focus too much on academia in the personal statement. This is your chance to show them how great you are as a person rather than your grades!

8. Betty Downs: I am struggling to decide on an opening sentence!

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Betty! Don't worry. This is something I struggled with too when I was writing mine. I started mine with "I always wondered about...".

9. Rachel B: Hi, I've started it but it's tricky

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Rachel! It is a great way for you to be yourself and share your interests!

10. Simone A: I've started, but I'm finding it hard to incorporate my subjects into it.

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Simone! It is really tricky isn't it! Maybe consider the skills you've gained from the subjects you study, and how these will be relevant to studying the course. For example, if you study science you may have developed lab skills, which would be helpful if you wish to study a STEM subject at university. Group projects you've done during your A-Levels show good organisation and teamwork, think about how that may help you when studying your chosen course. I hope that this helps! Sophie

11. Freya Rose: How important is the first line of your personal statement?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Freya! First lines are pretty important as they will immediately captivate the reader as they begin develop their impression of you. Keep it professional and try not to fall into the trap of using clichés or very common phrases. I hope this helps, Sophie

12. Kayleigh Chaffe: not even started yet!

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Kayleigh! It can feel really daunting getting started! I'd recommend starting out just by making a simple list of skills you have and a few things you want to include, and go from there! Sophie

13. precious 2: yes I have, just stuck on what to write if I'm not sure on the course I want to do?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi! Have you checked out the careerpilot website? It has a whole database of careers and courses you could consider so I'd really recommend checking it out! In terms of what to write, talk about your own achievements, hobbies, and experiences and link these to the skills you have developed. Then, try linking this to how these skills will come in useful in academia when you get to university. I hope this helps! Sophie

14. Safia Benyoucef: I have a few ideas on what to include, but what does the University of Exeter look for in a personal statement?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Safia! You need to be yourself. It's great to put your interests, hobbies, academic skills and achievements in your statements. You should make it relevant to the course(s) you wish to apply.

15. Shimoli Shah: Hi! I am applying for medicine. Will my personal statement be reviewed at Exeter due to being a scholar? Thank you

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Shimoli! I'm afraid I'm not sure on this. Try having a look on the Exeter Scholars website or you can log an enquiry at exeter.ac.uk/enquiry and they should be able to point you in the right direction of who can best answer this for you! Sophie

16. Abigail Lowe: Hiya, I am a young carer, do you think I should mention this in my personal statement?

* Siobhan Harper: Hi Abigail. Thanks for your question! You can definitely mention this in your personal statement if you want to. It would be great if you could talk about being a young carer in a way that highlights the transferable skills you've gained from your caring role – such as responsibility, independence, problem solving, empathy, etc. Bear in mind that you only get so many characters in a personal statement (4000), so you want to make sure that everything you mention is demonstrating why you would be a good student for the course you're applying to, and your role as a young carer is likely to be mentioned elsewhere on your application form (either in your personal details, or in your teacher reference). I hope that this is helpful, but do email us at exeterscholars@exeter.ac.uk if you have any further questions.

17. Sam de la Feuillade: Yes I have, should my personal statement be specific to a certain course of choice or is it better to be more generic such as a whole subject instead?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Sam! I personally based my personal statement on the choice of applying to a Business course.

18. Max Rickards: How specific would you recommend being about the course you are applying for in your personal statement?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Max! When I wrote my personal statement I only gave some reasons of why I was interested in the Business field. You don't need to be really specific but the point is to show that you are interested and you would be a great fit.

19. Safia Benyoucef: What adaptations have been made as a result of the coronavirus? Are lectures online?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Safia! For questions related to the coronavirus you can contact: www.exeter.ac.uk/coronavirus/prospectivestudents/.

20. Leo Hunter: Hello, I have managed to write most of my personal statement but am struggling slightly on how to finish it off, do you have any suggestions?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Leo! In my personal statement I finished by talking about my passion and interests. If you have already mentioned it, you can finish with a little anecdote.

21. SamuelCambridge: What size and font do you use in your personal statement? Do you use paragraphs?

* Siobhan Harper: Hi Sam. Thanks for your question! I would definitely recommend using paragraphs when you're writing your personal statement. However, the font and size etc. don't matter – your personal statement will be copied and pasted into a box on the UCAS application form, which will remove this formatting. The personal statement is measured in characters rather than words or pages, so as long as you keep to the character limit, it doesn't matter what formatting you use to write it. My advice would be to write the personal statement however you prefer, and then copy it into the UCAS application form when you're completely happy with it. I hope that this helps, but please contact us at exeterscholars@exeter.ac.uk if you have any further questions.

22. Eleanor Tucker: What's the most important thing to talk about on a personal statement, and what's something that people usually include on their personal statement that isn't needed.

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Eleanor, I would suggest focusing your personal statement on your interests, hobbies, academic skills and achievements. You can even discuss your favourite book, TV programs, as long as it is relevant to your course!

23. Ellie Hull 2020: If I am unsure of a particular course to take at uni, is it better to make multiple copies of personal statements or make a more general personal statement that fits across the board when I apply for the certain courses through UCAS?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Ellie! It might be useful for you to write a couple and then submit the one most relevant to the courses you decide to apply to when you submit your application. Sophie

24. Luke Ward: Hi, how many references should you make to text when writing your personal statement?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Luke! Do you mean referencing sources? You shouldn't need to do this in your personal statement, it should be all about you! Sophie

25. Spencer Shepherd: should your first paragraph be based on why you want to study the course you're applying for? Or does that come later?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Spencer! There are a lots of ways to structure your personal statement, there is definitely no single correct way! Some people choose to begin with a personal story and others with talking about subjects that they enjoyed at school. I personally wrote about my personal background.

26. Rachel B: Would you recommend mentioning a book that is directly relating to a career that could be achieved by doing the course rather than the course itself?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Rachel, keep the statement specific to you and the skills you have! If a book has caused you to take interest in the career then that's great and you could include that as justification for why you're suited to the course. Sophie

27. Amina Rahman: Hi, I think that I may've incorporated too much about the subject rather than myself, and have already surpassed the word count

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Amina! If you feel that you incorporated too much about the subject, you could maybe adapt it a little bit and talk about yourself. It's always great to put your interests, hobbies, academic skills and achievements in your statement.

28. James Sullivan: How should you end a personal statement?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi James. End with a summary of what you've talked about, and be really string on what makes YOU right for this course! Sophie

29. Emma Lovering: What percentage of our personal statement should be academic?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Emma, There's no set amount that should be academic. The universities already know your predicted grades so if you'd like to incorporate academics try to demonstrate the skills you've learnt from managing your studies! I hope this helps! Sophie

30. BenHeyes: Hi all, is it a good idea to include participation in Exeter Scholars in a personal statement?

* Siobhan Harper: Hi Ben. Thanks for your question! Yes, it's definitely a good idea to mention Exeter Scholars in your personal statement – it shows engagement with a university-level subject, and (especially if you're applying for a different course from the subject strand you were on) it demonstrates an interest in university and therefore a good level of awareness and knowledge about what university life and study is like. You should try and talk about it by way of what skills you've gained from being on the programme – whether that's transferable skills (such as independence, problem solving, commitment) or subject-specific skills / knowledge. I hope that this helps, but do contact us at exeterscholars@exeter.ac.uk if you have any further questions at all.

31. Shimoli Shah: For a medicine personal statement, how much focus should be on my extra-curriculars?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi,

I don't do medicine myself but I do Medical Imaging! I'd recommend putting quite a lot of focus on extra-curriculars as skills you gain from these such as leadership, time management, and balancing your studies are really important in a medical career! I hope this helps! Sophie

32. Talan Grigg: How good is the physics department at Exeter? And what's student life like

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Talan! I don't study physics myself but I've heard good things! I'd recommend checking out the Exeter website and also come to an online open day. There you'll be able to chat to ambassadors who are on your course of interest. Student life in Exeter is great. There's always loads to do, the campuses are beautiful, and we are packed with clubs and societies! I hope this helps. Sophie

33. Kristi Greenwood: How would you open your personal statement?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Kristi! I gave an information about me coming from a multicultural family. It totally depends on what you want to focus from the beginning, it can be about you or your interest in the course you are applying to.

34. Safia Benyoucef: I have looked at a couple of personal statements online, the main structure includes a quote, definition the quote and then talking about the work experience they did and what they learnt from that. However I was wondering whether you could talk about your personal life and where your interest for the subject actually stems from. For example, I would like to study law. I want to talk about the injustices that I have witnessed and how corrupt the UK justice system is. I want to talk about creating change in the world

we live in. Would you suggest this approach? (As well as my academic achievements, books I have read and the summer school I have attended)

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Safia! Personally I wouldn't include a quote, they come off as cliché and the admissions teams want to know what you have to say, not someone else! You can absolutely go more into where your interest for the subject stems from - this will show them your enthusiasm for the subject. Work experience is also very relevant. Just be sure to keep it professional, and don't dig too deep into the issues but more use them as a jumping point for why you want to study law. I hope that makes sense? Good luck! Sophie

35. Abigail Lowe: I have started writing my personal statement and I have managed to link all my extra curriculars and part time job to my course. Is this how it's meant to be?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Abigail! Well done! Universities do not look for specific structure but at the statement as a whole. Remember to be yourself, imagine that you are trying to introduce yourself to someone. And I would suggest focusing around transferable skills (from your working experience) that may be applicable to the course you are applying to.

36. Hailey Law: What is best to put in the introduction of a personal statement?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Hailey! I'd include a bit about what you are like as a person and what makes you want to study the subject! Sophie

37. Emily stent: Hi, any suggestions on how to introduce your personal statement / what to avoid

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Emily! You should avoid using cliché words 'passionate'. I personally talked about my personal background.

38. Louis Buschtoens: Would there be any key differences to think about when writing for an engineering course?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Louis, I don't think there would be specific differences for an engineering course, just be sure to research the course thoroughly. Try to link you hobbies, extra-curriculars, and other skills to the skills you need to be an engineer. Hope this helps! Sophie

39. Grace Pitts: Hi, do you have any tips on where to start with your personal statement?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Grace! Start by writing your ideas: sports, passion, interest, subject... And once you have everything down it will be very helpful to start structure it and develop it. Good luck!

40. Abigail Lowe: Should you try to link your A level subjects to the course your applying for?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Abigail! You can definitely write about your A level subjects if there is a link. It's always good to show where your interest came from.

41. Kayleigh Chaffe: If you haven't done any work experience and not going to do any do you think this is a big drawback?

* Siobhan Harper: Hi Kayleigh. Thanks for your question! Given that this is pretty much the case for almost everyone in your year group across the country, we do not think that this would be a big drawback. You should definitely try and do things to contribute to your personal statement that aren't work experience and that don't require anything that isn't possible at this time, e.g. reading books on your subject, maybe contacting academics in your chosen field, maybe organising a study group or similar. Everything that you've done in your life can be used to demonstrate transferable skills (part-time job, Duke of Edinburgh, sports groups, music groups, particular hobbies), so do use everything that you can! But pretty much everyone in your year group will have been unable to get work experience, so please don't worry about this aspect; instead, try and use what you already have to show why you would make a great student for your chosen course. I hope that this helps, but please email us at exeterscholars@exeter.ac.uk if not!

42. Emily Rees: Hiya, I have written my personal statement however I am worried that I haven't spoken about all of the extra-curricular activities that I've done that are relevant to the course I am applying to as the 4000 character limit has prevented me in doing so. Is it necessary for me to mention everything that I have done?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Emily! They would be great attributes to mention. It is important to introduce yourself as a person and show your personality and interests! You don't need to say everything but the most important things that you have done.

43. Rosie Pring: should I have different paragraphs focusing on different topics? And what should they be

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Rosie! It really depends on what you want to emphasize on. In my personal statement, I wrote a paragraph on my background, another one on my skills and interest, and on the subject I was applying to.

44. Safia Benyoucef: in reference to the UCAS application itself what is a campus code? For those who passed the programme, is their not a code we should put on our application, if so, how does this work?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Safia, Campus codes are unique to each university, I think it's just a way of identifying the university you are applying to. I'm not sure whether this should be used on a scholars programme application. If you contact exeter.ac.uk/enquiry with this question and let them know you'd like to speak to someone from the Scholar's programme about this then they should be able to help! Sophie

45. lauren lam: I've talked more about my extra curriculums and what transferable skills I've learnt from them more than my subjects, is that alright or should I talk more about my subjects?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Lauren! It is always good to balance between both. There are lots of ways to structure personal statements. You can maybe link your skills to the subject you are applying to.

46. Maisey Barrow: If a teacher suggests to change something about your personal statement but you want to keep it as it is, what would you recommend doing?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Maisey! Talking from my personal experience, when a teacher gives you an advice, take it! And if you are not convinced you can always ask another teacher.

47. Sam de la Feuillade: How should I finish my personal statement?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Sam! I'd recommend ending with a strong summary of why you should be on that course! Sophie

48. Kieran Thornton: Hi, I'm interesting in studying mathematics or sport at uni. Do you have any suggestions on how I could write a personal statement that could be appropriate for both very different subjects?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Kieran! That is a tricky one. I'd recommend considering the skills you will need for both subjects and for further study in general - time keeping, team work, responsibility etc. I hope this helps, Sophie

49. Amber Rogers: If you are applying for a deferred entry should you include this in your personal statement?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Amber, I believe it could be beneficial to talk about what you are doing, why you are doing it, and how it'll be relevant to your course if you are planning a gap year! Sophie

50. Grace Pitts: How long should you roughly spend on your personal statement?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Grace! I personally spent at least 3 days on my personal statement draft. Then I gave myself a few days to take a step back and looked at it again. It really depends.

51. shelvi shah: Any pointers on how to write a good conclusion? (For medicine)

* Student Ambassador01: Hi! Try to summarise the points you've made and really tap into why you deserve to be on this course. Medicine is competitive and so it's really important to be strong in your statement and tell them you deserve this place on their course! Sophie

52. lauren lam: I want to apply to 2 different courses at different universities so should I write more broadly for the 2 or go in detail for the 2 courses

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Lauren! It can be hard to combine the information about your hobbies, interests, academic skills and going in detail for the 2 courses. I would recommend writing more broadly for the 2 courses and if you can in the 4 000 characters develop a bit more. Good luck!

53. Safia Benyoucef: when talking about uniqueness in a law personal statement, could I talk about the injustices that have occurred in society and how that has jolted my passion for law? Or should that be dismissed?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Safia! I think it's a good idea to talk about how they inspired you to study law, just don't go too deep into explaining the injustices themselves (the statement needs to be about YOU). Also, be sure to keep it professional! Sophie

54. Sam Shapland: After your opening sentence what else is good to include in your opening paragraph or second paragraph?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello Sam! It is always good to mention your personal background. In my experience, coming from a multicultural family I found it relevant. If you don't want to, you can always talk about your interests!

55. James Sullivan: Is it worth mentioning whether you have a part time job?

* Student Ambassador02: Hello James! You can, it is great to put your achievements in your statement.

56. Safia Benyoucef: Thank you so much for this session. I was very beneficial!

* Student Ambassador01: Glad you found it helpful! Sophie

57. * Student Ambassador01: Thanks very much for taking part in today's online forum; I hope you've found it useful! Details of the next session can be found at www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/currentparticipants/liveonlineqforums/. If you have questions in the meantime, please contact the Exeter Scholars team, who will be happy to help: www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/contact/currentparticipants/.