

Writing Personal Statements



Basic Structure

Section 1 (40%)

- Why have you chosen this subject?
- Background to your interest/more specific detail.
- Relevant work experience – vital for medical courses.
- Relevant taster courses/residential courses – what did you learn?
- Career aspirations – mention if relevant.

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Basic Structure

Section 2 (35%)

- What particular interests do you have in your current AS and A2 courses?
- Mention all your subjects briefly explaining which parts have been enjoyable/useful – spend most time on main subject.
- Mention evidence of wider reading/research – articles, books etc. and evaluate them.

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Basic Structure

Section 3 (25%)

- Mention extra-curricular interests.
- Mention achievements – music, drama, DoE
- Give evidence of leadership potential – and/or involvement in teams, clubs, councils.
- Mention volunteer work.
- Other successes e.g. marathons, fundraising..
- Gap year plans, if relevant.

Top Tips

1. Avoid waffle, generalisations and poor expression – be precise, concise, clear.
2. Avoid humour – this is a professional document.
3. Avoid slang, colloquial language.
4. Aim to fill all 47 lines.
5. Aim to appear interested, enthusiastic, well read with an informed opinion.



Top Tips

6. Sell yourself – promote achievements and potential.
7. Check spelling, grammar, punctuation – proof read carefully!
8. Be yourself – not the “ideal” candidate.
9. Avoid plagiarism – it may jeopardise your application.
10. Seek advice /opinions from subject teachers and tutors.



Openings

- E.H. Carr called history “ an unending dialogue between the present and the past”, a concept that has always fascinated me. Each age will see something different in the past as being “significant”. History tells us not only about the nature of the past but about the nature of the age in which history is written. For example, the way current historians interpret the Crusades is informed by the present situation in the Middle East, but also needs to take into account the views of historians contemporary to those cataclysmic events. The concept of a “clash of civilisations “ needs to be tested in both the present and the past.



Openings

- Having spent the first 13 years of my life in Kenya, it was always going to be a culture shock when I moved to England four years ago. My time in both countries has given me a better perspective on the globe on which we live. From a young age I was fascinated by the human race. Through visits to Samburu and Masai settlements and day-to-day living in Nairobi, I began to realise the great diversity within human culture, further revealed by trips to Kenya's Islamic coast and then by a move to England. Here I experienced a very different outlook and a very different way of life captured well in *Watching the English* by Kate Fox. My own life has triggered a need to understand more about the reason for these differences.....Anthropology is the obvious route to this knowledge.

Openings

- To me, language in its essence represents a key to another culture, opening the door to a world of new experiences. Since childhood I have been amazed by the vast difference in thinking and lifestyles on opposite sides of the channel. Visiting France annually with my family, such contrasts have fascinated me, and in studying the French language, I have attempted to become more than just an observer, but rather a participant and appreciator. The wealth of culture thrills which this has imparted is my greatest motivation in taking my study of French to university level, as well as expanding the possibility of such opportunities in the study of Spanish.

Openings

- Our continually evolving world has made chemistry essential. Chemistry has such a vast scope with countless areas of application, from the study of the orbiting electrons to transesterification of vegetable oils into biodiesel. This is why I want to study chemistry. Science has always been a strong interest of mine and I have tried to sample many different branches, from engineering to molecular biology. A few years ago, I led a team in a Smallpeice (sic) engineering course where we made and programmed a robot. Earlier this year, I was fortunate enough to visit CERN and tour the LHCb collider. It is not only the ground breaking physics that amazed me, but it was the scale of this engineering that left me wondering what contribution I could make. I took the time to visit Dr Cutler's MCB lab, where his work on endothelial cells was very impressive. In addition, I also managed to visit Dr Dullen's colloid lab; here I found the tuning of the chemical properties of particles remarkable and its potential application within material science fascinating. This final visit fully cemented my passion for chemistry.

Openings

- I have been fascinated by technology for as long as I can remember and I feel so lucky to have grown up when it's at its most progressive. Working with computers always seemed like the best way to do things in my home and academic life, leading to more time spent playing video games than I would like to admit but this helped me to take a keen interest into games and really admire the way they are created. I want to understand how videogames can truly immerse someone, to the point of giving a sense of presence, sending very real shivers down your spine; I want to learn how to engage someone fully in a world you have helped create. Learning how to create a game that does this is a big ambition of mine which is why I want to excel in this course; creating that excitement or fear or addiction from an idea of my own is something I would give one hundred percent to achieve.

Openings

- Attending the conference of social psychologist Professor Zimbardo opened my eyes to how Psychology has developed and become more scientific in its approach since the notorious 'Stanford Prison Experiment'. Whilst ethics and statistical analysis has been improved, over-bearing debates such as nature versus nurture are still at the forefront of modern research. Old concepts being constantly challenged by new research evidence makes the world of Psychology exciting, and has interested me like no other subject. This led me to achieve 100 UMS marks in PSYA3, sparking an interest to study it further.
- Psychology made me question people's logical and illogical thought processes, and challenged my pre-existing ideas. Seeing mine and my peers' attitudes change as a consequence fascinates me. In my opinion the ability for Psychology to reform and evolve my attitudes is unique and makes me eager to learn more. Debating around others' views also enabled me to think deeper into the subject rather than just on the surface of the issue. Attending a presentation by Claire Rytina, a sufferer of Viral Encephalitis, provided a reality of the psychological effects illness can have. Meeting someone and learning about the psychological impact of illness has made me want to explore volunteering opportunities at university with similar individuals.

Middle sections

- Biology has made me appreciate the complexity of life processes like respiration and photosynthesis. I find the biochemistry part of these processes, such as glycolysis, intriguing as it covers ideas that I have learned from Chemistry as well. Finally in Philosophy I have been introduced to important ideas about how the mind and body are connected, as well as looking at key ethical dilemmas related to medicine, including euthanasia and abortion. I am also taking Critical Thinking as an extra AS level in my spare time. This is teaching me how to analyse data and arguments which will be important in making impartial decisions in a clinical setting.

Extra example

With the ever-expanding advancements in technology the issues affecting our world today are increasingly solved by Engineering based solutions, be that an artificial limb to rehabilitate a wounded soldier or a vehicle with reduced environmental impact. This industry, I believe is one in which real difference is made to peoples lives, and is one I would love to have the opportunity to be involved in. I am often excited by the idea of developing the skills I have acquired through academic success, like problem solving and analysis, to make a positive influence on the world.

After following the TedTalks series 'Body by Design', I found particular interest in a talk by Hugh Herr, introducing me to the possibilities of controlling prosthetics and bionic limbs with neural signals, and the potential of inducing senses in these devices. Projects like this are amongst those I find most inspiring, as technology and nature begin to overlap and help form solutions to real world problems. I personally believe that the gap between engineering and disciplines such as medicine is becoming significantly smaller. The rapid development of this field creates a lot of exciting research opportunities, many of which provide the potential for great benefit to society. I also attended a lecture at Imperial College London by Etienne Burdette, regarding the use of machine learning in rehabilitation of the disabled. These talks were amongst a variety of influences that inspired my extended project, which addresses the mechanics of the human anatomy in conjunction with the use of orthopedics and prosthetics in helping bodily function. My increasing interest in engineering triggered me to read deeper into the subject, with books like *The Gecko's Foot* By Peter Forbes being amongst material that I enjoyed most, as it addressed the various inspirations of nature in the field of Science and Engineering.

Middle sections

- My A-levels in Music, Music Tech and English have given me great experience in a range of fields from skills as a musician and song writer, studio and live sound production techniques, skills in sound engineering and even a knowledge of journalism. I also chose to do an extended project qualification, which I based on Reverb and how it's affected by different spaces. I did this by recording a musician in a diverse range of environments such as a studio, a field and an anechoic chamber. I focused more on the scientific element of music and how I could apply that to live sound production. At the end of Sixth Form I was proud to receive the Governors Award for Music Technology which I was awarded for my "excellent attitude to developing new skills", my "depth of understanding and enthusiasm for learning" and for being "supportive of my peers".
- Through my school years I've gained a spread of experience starting with my work experience in my school's Music Department in year 11. This involved tutoring and helping younger students in music classes and also helping out with recording in the school studio. As I got older I started to become more interested in the technical side of music such as studio recording and live sound and lighting. My Music Tech course gave me the opportunity to use studio equipment and processes with my own coursework and projects. As my knowledge developed I started helping out with sound and lighting for school shows and concerts and I also helped with studio recording other students' work and songs in my spare time. For my second stage of work experience I spent a week at my dance academy where I helped with organizing the Swindon Dance community show and also helped with sound and lighting during the performances.

Concluding paragraphs

- For three years I have been a member of a storytelling group that travels across the country performing in events and festivals. Having to capture the imagination of an audience with only your voice and face has made me a confident and articulate person which is highly important for a doctor who has to communicate with patients. My leadership skills were demonstrated at my comprehensive school as a prefect and a student council member. These experiences taught me to be strict, reliable and fair.....



Concluding paragraphs

- Travel constitutes for me a real excitement whether through school trips to the volcanoes and glaciers of Iceland and the eroded coast of Malta with its hugely exciting opportunities for scuba diving, or on journeys with the National Children's Orchestra to the Czech Republic and the County Youth Orchestra to Cyprus. Such travel has given me much food for thought on both economic and physical issues that impinge on globalisation. I have recently accepted an invitation to travel to Australia as a gap year student, mainly to teach hockey and other sports, an opportunity that would not only enhance my knowledge of geography but also improve my leadership skills.....



Conclusions

- Overall I believe I have the necessary academic/intellectual ability, motivation and stamina to cope successfully with this challenging degree course and I look forward to the opportunities university has to offer.