

My UCAS Guidance Pack

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Why go to Uni?

Not everyone will want or need to go to university. Plenty of people choose not to go and achieve great things nevertheless, in fields such as business, trade, entertainment and sport. However, there's no doubt that a degree will put you ahead of the game in most careers. And for some vocations - management, teaching, law or politics, for example - you will almost certainly need one.

Earning potential

If you want to secure a good financial future for yourself and your family, university is a good place to start. Over a lifetime, graduates earn an average of over £415k more than someone without a degree.

Your earning potential will vary, depending on what degree you choose. The average graduate starting salary is between £18k and £26k, although a high-flying career like investment banking could see you kick off on as much as £45k! Compare these starting incomes to the national average salary of £26k, and you can see that a graduate sets out on their working life well up the pay scale, and has a lot more earning potential than a non-graduate. Although tuition fees are high, it's wise to see them as an investment in the future. Money may not be the best or the only reason to pursue a university degree but if you're worried about fees and loans, do bear in mind the long term financial benefits.

A chance for you to grow – and have a good time

Of course, it's not just about getting a good job at the end of it. University will allow you to develop your knowledge of a subject you love, and meet lots of likeminded people. It will also teach you about living independently, and help you to develop a host of vital life skills. And then there are the many opportunities and experiences beyond the classroom on offer. This certainly includes the hectic nightlife of most university towns, but extends much further to the hundreds of clubs, societies and organised activities available at higher education institutions. These not only offer you the chance to learn new skills, make friends and have a lot of fun, but will also look good on your CV and impress future employers.

Choosing your course

Alongside making the decision to go to university, you'll need to think about the subject you'd like to study – and with thousands of different courses available at hundreds of different institutions, you may find you're spoiled for choice. If you have a career path in mind, you'll probably want to pursue a degree that's vocational, or at least relevant. Otherwise, you could opt for a subject because you like it, because it's a natural progression from one of more of your A2s, or because you're good at it.

Whether the decision is difficult or a no-brainer for you, it's important to spend plenty of time exploring your options and working out which degree will stand you in good stead for where you want to be in the future. Although it can be a bit scary to consider, the choices you make now could influence your direction not just for the next three years, but for life.

Do make sure you are realistic, from the start, about your chances of securing a place at a particular institution, or gaining the required qualifications.

Aim to make sure your five choices are for the same, or at least broadly similar, courses. You can only write one personal statement, and you will find it difficult to convince selectors of your interest and commitment if you are trying to cover several different subjects in one go.

Taking a gap year

More and more students are choosing to take gap years before starting university in order to travel, volunteer, get work experience or simply earn some money to help fund university life. You can either choose to apply this year and defer your entry, or apply next year during your gap year. However, having a place secured before you head off into the sunset will give you considerable peace of mind – and if you apply whilst still at school, you'll have the support of very knowledgeable staff to help you with the process.

What some of last year's applicants say.....

'Going to university was by far the best and most life changing choice I ever made. Thirteen years of education have led me to a position that will take me further than I could have hoped for. The academic life is a good life, it's exciting, it's challenging, it's completely independent and I honestly couldn't imagine myself anywhere else.'

'I love every aspect of student life. I feel I have grown into a more confident and independent person and my course has made me a more efficient and enthusiastic learner. I'm looking forward to the next two years and beyond!'

'Although it was a bit daunting at first, I've loved every minute. University has turned me into a much more confident person and has given me a brand new attitude to learning. I now can't wait to see what the future will bring.'

'I'm so glad I made the decision to come to uni. After a lot of uncertainty regarding whether I would cope being away from the comfort of home, I have no regrets whatsoever. I have made wonderful friends and found a new sense of independence. This is the happiest I've been in years.'

Useful Websites

www.ucas.com

When applying to university you do so online, through UCAS. You'll be logging in and out of this site repeatedly during the application process, so it's worth registering early and taking time to find your way around it. It offers loads of information, and is the best place to start when looking for courses and institutions. You can search under a number of criteria to find a course or university to suit you, and follow links to the sites of the individual institutions.

www.whatuni.com

www.push.co.uk

www.applytouni.com

www.bestcourse4me.com

www.purepotential.org

www.university.which.co.uk

www.universityfinder.org.uk

www.tips4uni.bham.ac.uk

www.thestudentroom.co.uk

These sites also have search engines that will allow you to explore your options, and/or lots of general information about higher education and the application process.

www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide

www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk

www.unistats.direct.gov.uk

Here you can search league tables and compare UK universities and subjects.

www.opendays.com

The university and college open day directory. Search for the specific institutions you're interested in, or browse the open day calendar.

www.thebigchoice.com

www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

www.graduates.co.uk

These sites will help you look ahead at potential careers.

www.ucas.com/students/applying/howtoapply/personalstatement

www.studential.com/personalstatements

www.cife.org.uk/how-to-write-a-good-ucas-personal-statement

www.studento.com/university-guide/applying-to-university/personal-statement.html

There's masses of information online that can help you put together a personal statement that will make you stand out from the crowd and impress admissions tutors. These pages offer a range of suggestions and should be used to guide you along with the information in the booklet, and the further guidance supplied to you by us here at school.

[www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Personal Statement Library](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Personal_Statement_Library)

Here you will find personal statements other students have submitted. You can search by subject and get a feel for what makes a good (and bad) personal statement. Be warned though – universities have software that will identify plagiarism and if you have copied from another statement, you can expect a steady stream of rejections!

www.gov.uk/student-finance

www.sfengland.slc.co.uk

www.slc.co.uk

Get the most up-to-date information on student finances, including advice on tuition fees, student loans and how to access financial help.

www.scholarship-search.org.uk

www.thescholarshiphub.org.uk

www.studentcashpoint.co.uk

www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk

It's worthwhile exploring alternative student funding opportunities, as there are many thousands of pounds up for grabs in the form of bursaries and scholarships, covering a wide range of eligibility criteria. These sites are a good starting point for researching the matter.

www.gapyear.com

www.gapyearjobs.co.uk

www.bunac.org

www.yearoutgroup.org

These sites look at various aspects of gap years.

www.degreesahead.co.uk

www.thestudentworld.com

For anyone looking to study abroad, these sites will give you a basic introduction to the process and the pros and cons of it.

www.skill.org.uk

Information and advice for disabled students.

You'll find books with information and guidance on higher education online at the UCAS bookstore www.ucasbooks.com, elsewhere on the web or at libraries including our own at school. You should also try and get hold of prospectuses for any institutions or courses you're interested in – you can usually order or download them from university websites, and there's a good range in the Vandyke library.

Social media can be really useful during the application process. For example, UCAS is on Facebook and Twitter: a great way to get a speedy answer to your questions.

The application cycle: what you need to do and when

Spring term, year 12:

- Sign up for a UCAS e-card. It's free, and you'll get useful information and offers emailed regularly to you.
- Speak to your teachers, career advisers, family and friends about what you want to do next.
- Start thinking about what you'd like to study at university, and begin researching courses and institutions. If you're not sure where to start, head to the library and check out the prospectuses, or use the online search tools at one of the websites suggested on page 4 of this booklet.

Summer term, year 12:

- Identify universities that you want to go to, aiming to narrow down your selection to between 5 and 10. Research the universities, using their websites and prospectuses. Speak to anyone who you know has been there, and visit it, or attend an open day.
- Go to some Open Days and take a look around some of the institutions and departments you're interested in.
- Check grade requirements, to make sure you're looking at realistic options for you. Look out for other requirements too, for example, do they want you to have work experience, or ask that you take an aptitude test?
- Get cracking on your personal statement. It's generally considered the most challenging aspect of the application process and getting it right can take a long time, so the earlier you start, the better. Use the guidance on pages 14-21 of this booklet, and ask your tutor or the sixth form team for help if you need it.
- Register on the UCAS website and make a start on filling in your personal, education and employment details. (For more advice on this, turn to on page 10 of this booklet.) You can save any data you've entered, and return to your application at any point later on, to add or amend.

Autumn term, year 13:

- If you're heading for Oxbridge or you want to do medicine, dentistry or veterinary science, bear in mind the early deadline: mid-October.
- Keep working on your personal statement. Ask Hollie, Mrs Page, or your tutor for help if you need it, and **make sure you've completed and handed in your first draft by September 12**. Hand in each new draft after that, for further advice and editing.
- Make a final decision on your five course choices (if you haven't already).

- Check your references have been done by your subject teachers and tutor - let them know what you're applying to study so that can fit your reference to your course. Make sure they've supplied the sixth form office with a predicted grade for you. (You should read your references and check your predicted grades: if for some reason you don't feel they are fair, ask to talk to them about it.) References and predicted grades are added to your application by the office, so once complete, you don't have to worry about these.
- When your statement's got the final thumbs-up from Mrs Page, cut and paste it onto your online application. The whole application is then checked for you.
- Make any final amendments to the application. Then pay online, and let the office know when you've done this. We send your application through to UCAS.

**Bear in mind the final official UCAS
deadline: Jan 15. However, please don't
leave it until then. Aim to get your
application completed and sent by the
time we break up for Christmas!**

Post-application:

- You hear back from universities with offers or rejections - this could be any time between sending it off and the following March.
- Prepare for and attend any interviews you are invited to by your universities. Make sure you've visited any institution you might end up at.
- Once you've got all your offers, you decide which will be your 'firm' choice, and which your will be your insurance choice (making sure your insurance choice has LOWER grade requirements than your firm choice.)
- If you don't receive any offers from universities, or if you change your mind about what you want to do and withdraw from all your original choices, you can make further applications as appropriate through UCAS Extra, which opens at the end of February. Alternatively, you can apply through clearing in August, once you've got your exam results and universities publish a list of available places.
- Apply for student finance as soon as applications open – usually in February or March.
- Apply for accommodation at both your firm and insurance universities.

**And now? Get your head
down and get those grades!**

Deadline dates for applications to UCAS

- **12 September:** School-set deadline for the submission of your first draft personal statement.
- **15 October:** Deadline for the receipt at UCAS of applications to universities of Cambridge or Oxford and applications for medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine/science.
- **12 December:** School-set final deadline for the submission of your final draft personal statement and/or UCAS application.
- **15 January:** Official final deadline for the receipt at UCAS of applications to all other courses, except some art and design courses.
- **14 March:** Deadline for the receipt of UCAS of applications for art and design courses except those listed with a 15 January deadline.

It makes sense to get your application in well ahead of the official UCAS deadline, which is why we suggest an earlier alternative deadline here at school. Many courses start offering places as soon as they start receiving offers. If yours is the last to arrive they might already be full, irrespective of how good your application actually is. So, the earlier you can get it in, the better!

UCAS Tariff Points

The table below shows the points available for current qualifications. Many courses state a tariff points score in their entry requirements, however some will also state specific grades to be achieved in specific subjects as part of these requirements.

You can convert A2 and AS level grades into the equivalent UCAS points with the handy online calculator here: www.coursefinder.telegraph.co.uk/ucas-calculator/

A2 Level Grade	AS Level Grade	Tariff Points
A*		140
A		120
B		100
C		80
D	A	60
	B	50
E	C	40
	D	30
	E	20
BTEC Certificate	BTEC Award	Tariff
DD		240
DM		200
MM		160
MP	D	120
PP	M	80
	P	40

Procedures for making a UCAS application

Please follow these procedures carefully, and make sure you save all your data regularly. Don't worry if you input anything wrongly, or need to amend something. You can easily log in at any stage and make changes to any section, right up until the moment your application is completed, approved, and sent to UCAS by the sixth form office.

Registering

- Go to the UCAS website at www.ucas.com and click on 'apply' then on 'Register/Login' to use Apply 2015 which will take you to the registration page. You will be asked to register your application which will take about 15 minutes.
- You should then register through the schools and colleges page. You will then be asked to enter your 'buzzword' which is VANDYKE15. The buzzword is case sensitive so please make sure you enter this in upper case.
- Next enter your personal details including your name, address, and date of birth.
- Carefully read through the section on your personal details; only click next once you are sure they are all correct.
- You will be asked to set your own password and security questions. Enter a password which is between 6 and 14 characters long and contains at least 1 number. Then enter your 4 security questions.
- Write down your username and password below and **KEEP IT SAFE!!** You'll also be given a Personal ID number, which you'll need to log in to Track, and be ready to quote if you call UCAS with a query at any stage, so make a note of that too.

Username _____
Password _____
Personal ID number _____

- You will be sent an email asking you to verify your application.
- You can go ahead and complete the form – it is fairly straightforward and for every piece of information you need to enter there are onscreen instructions and advice that relate specifically to it. Just click on the box with a question mark.

Adding Personal Details

- **Date of birth** – make sure you enter this correctly. The system is designed to ensure that you don't put in the wrong date. It will check with you whether the date you have entered is correct via a pop-up dialogue box, suggesting possible reasons why it might be wrong. Similarly, if you enter a date that doesn't exist the system will tell you so and you will have to do it again.
- **Student Support** – in most cases you should enter '02', which means you'll be seeking student finance, in the Fee Code box. In the space below you should select 'Bedfordshire'. If anyone is seeking sponsorship, see Clare or Hollie to clarify coding.
- **Area of Permanent Residence** – is, in most cases, Bedfordshire or Buckinghamshire.
- **Country of Birth and Nationality** – if you were born in England/Scotland/Wales or Northern Ireland you should enter your nationality as UK National.
- **Residential Category** – for most this will be 'A': UK/EU National. If you are not sure, ask your tutor or the sixth form team for help.
- **Reference Numbers** – these can be left blank.
- **Occupational Background/Ethnic Origin** – these sections aren't compulsory, and whatever you write here will not be seen by the universities or colleges. It's simply useful statistical information for UCAS.
- **Nominated Access** – this is just someone that you'd be happy for UCAS to correspond with in case you're away at any point during the application process. Usually it will be your mum or dad.

Adding Choices

- **Institution code** - click on 'see list' and select the university you want to apply to.
- **Course code** – click on 'see list' and select the course you want to apply to.
- **Start date** – this is most likely to be September 2015, however, you can indicate here that you're deferring entry if you plan to take a gap year.
- **Point of entry** – leave this blank, unless you intend to take a foundation year, in which case, enter 0.

Most applicants choose to fill in their course choices last, allowing themselves plenty of time to research and make a decision. You can go back in and change your mind about your choices at any stage before the application is sent.

You can apply for up to five courses. It's not compulsory, but you'd be wise to use all five, to maximise your chances.

There is no preference order. The institutions you apply to will not know whether they're on the top of your wish list, or the bottom!

Adding Education

- **Add centre** - select Vandyke Upper School from the drop-down box.
- **Add qualifications** – a dropdown menu offers all the types of qualifications you could have gained, or are currently studying for, here at Vandyke. The sixth form office can print out a list so that you know exactly what you've taken in the past, as well as grades and exam boards. List all your GCSE and AS results, and don't forget to include any others such as Functional Skills, OCRs and Adult Numeracy Certificates.
- **A2s** - You must list all the A2s you are currently taking, and in the drop-down box for grades, select pending.
- **BTECs** – there are a number of different BTEC qualifications to select from. If you are unsure which is correct, please check. Staff in the exams office will print out the details, so you can be sure you've got them right. They can also tell you your most recent BTEC registration number, which you need to enter in the box provided.

**You must add grades for ALL
qualifications – even if you got a U! ☹**

Adding Employment

- If you've had any paid jobs, enter the job title and employer's name and address here. Details of any unpaid or voluntary experience go into your personal statement. Leave the section blank if you haven't had a paid job, but remember to mark it complete.

Adding your Personal Statement

- Ensure your personal statement is typed using Word, either at home or in the Study Centre/Library. The online program does NOT have a spell-check facility so make sure you have spell-checked it before you copy it into your UCAS form.
- Your personal statement must be typed using 'Times New Roman' size 12 font and can be a maximum of 4000 characters long including spaces. It must not exceed 47 lines in the UCAS program.
- Do not input it until you have had your final draft approved by Mrs Page or the sixth form office. Once you've got the go ahead, cut and paste it on to your UCAS application in the box provided.
- You must click 'preview' before you can mark this section complete. This will tell you if you're over the character limit, and by how much.

Pay/Send

- This is the very last stage of the application process (apart from the very last check, and hitting 'send', which we do from the sixth form office.)
- You'll need a credit card to pay the application fee, which is £23.
- If you're a bursary student, check with Hollie when the time comes to pay for your UCAS fee – you may be eligible to have the amount paid for you by school.

Using Track

- After you've sent off your application you can see how it's progressing by logging on to the UCAS 'Track' system.
- Log in any time using your personal ID number, username and password.
- UCAS will email you whenever there's an update.

If you're not sure about anything, ASK! Friends who have already completed the application may know the answer, or you can go to Hollie or Clare in the sixth form office.

Staff at UCAS are extremely friendly and helpful and are always happy to answer questions, via their telephone helpline (0871 468 0468), Facebook page or Twitter feed.

ADD A PAGE IN HER ABOUT OTHER TESTS – LNAT, QTS ETC

Personal statements – a short guide

Your personal statement is a vital element of your UCAS application. Admissions tutors use them to decide which applicants are best suited to their courses, so it's crucial that you write a convincing statement, using every sentence to effectively but concisely make your case whilst paying careful attention to structure, style, spelling and grammar.

It's natural to feel bewildered by the prospect of writing something that matters so much - and almost everyone finds it tough to get started. Your best bet is to kick off in note form, jotting down all the points that might be useful to include. The personal statement planning boxes on the following pages will help you to do this, so please make use of them!

You need to talk mainly about the subject you want to take, why you want to take it, and why the relevant skills and experiences you've gained so far - along with the enthusiasm you have for the subject - make you a suitable candidate. Aim to devote up to two thirds or even three-quarters of the statement to this.

The remainder can be used to sell your extra-curricular skills, hobbies, and experiences. If possible, anything learned from these should also be linked to your suitability for the course or to university life in general. Give specific evidence of the skills you've gained - if you work in a shop, say what it involves (eg using a till, answering customers' queries, stocktaking, working in a team), and how you have benefitted. Even if you haven't done much outside of school, you *do* have skills: for example, chatting with friends online and on the phone shows you can communicate both verbally and in writing; arranging parties with your mates demonstrates that you're an effective organiser. However, you will do better if you have concrete skills that are relevant to the course, so if you haven't undertaken any related work or voluntary experience, start making arrangements to do so NOW!

Read around the subject and show your knowledge by mentioning authors or texts you have found interesting. This is particularly important for subjects that involve a lot of reading. Relevant blogs, newspaper articles and documentaries can also be valuable, and you should tap into current affairs if you can. Make sure you know what you're talking about, though – selectors are very likely to ask about anything you mention in your statement at interview.

You need a good opening! Admissions tutors read thousands of personal statements every year. They won't remember the hundreds that start 'I've always wanted to study...' or 'Ever since I was young I've enjoyed...' This is your chance to try and stand out from the (very large) crowd. Show you're an individual, and make your opening snappy and unique.

Finally, remember this is your only opportunity to get across a sense of who YOU are on your application. You may get to further this at interview, but many courses don't even bother with that part of the process and base the whole thing on what you write - so your personal statements needs to reveal the best YOU that you have ever been!

Personal statement planning

You have 4000 characters to show admissions tutors why they should pick you over other candidates. The key to a great statement is planning, organisation and SKILLS.

The suggested structure looks like this: Introduction – your interests in the subject (academic/non-academic) – wider skills – summary.

Introduction

You need to explain, briefly but convincingly, why you want to study your subject at university. One good way to do this is to start with a ‘personal trigger’ that got you interested in that subject. This could be a book, a trip, a documentary, a childhood experience, a teacher, work experience, or the lessons you’ve gained so far from earlier studies of the subject. Go on to develop this with why the subject is important and inspiring to you and discuss your personal motivation to study this subject. Think about why you think this subject is significant in society, and perhaps link it to current affairs. Explain what you hope to get out of your university degree – if you have relevant career ambitions, mention them. After explaining why you want to study the subject, go on to explain what specific areas interest you, and how you hope a degree course will develop your passion further.

What was my personal trigger?

How does my subject relate to society or current affairs?

Which aspects of the course am I looking forward to studying in more detail, and why?

Your interest in the subject

Start with what you've been doing in school to develop your interest in the subject. Have your A levels given you the opportunity to study the subject in more detail? What have you enjoyed, and why? Think about the skills you are developing in your current subjects that will be useful for your degree, such as essay-writing, analysis, and research. Write down everything you can think of. (You don't need to fill every box!)

	A Level 1	A Level 2	A Level 3	A Level 4	A Level 5
Skill 1					
Skill 2					

Next you need to think about what you've been doing outside of the classroom as academic achievement won't be enough to impress those admissions tutors! Make a list of all your extra-curricular activities, giving details of trips, books, documentaries, research or experiences you found inspiring and why. Remember to be specific, but also honest! Anything that goes on your personal statement is likely to be brought up at subsequent interviews so you need to be able to talk about it in detail.

Use the boxes overleaf to list any extra-curricular activities you have been a part of, and to detail all the skills and characteristics they have helped you to develop and enhance.

Activity	Tick	Description	Why has it made you more suitable?
Outside reading			
Theatre trips			
Exhibitions			
School clubs			
Clubs outside of school			
Voluntary work			
Museum trips			
Historical sites			
Trips abroad			
Community activities			
Documentaries			
Articles			
Hobbies			
Work experience			
Competitions/ awards			
Published work			
Workshops/ programmes			
Summer school			
Part-time job			
Other			

Wider Skills

This is the area for you to talk about your non-academic achievements in and out of school as well as your interests and hobbies. This is where you can cover anything not necessarily related to your course and explain what kind of person you really are. It's your chance to showcase the skills you have developed through hobbies and work.

Skill	Activity
Communication	
Commitment	
Time management	
Teamwork	
Initiative	
Public speaking	
Sense of responsibility	
Adaptability	

Organisation	
Leadership	
Research and analysis	

Gap Years

If you're planning a gap year and applying for a deferred entry, explain what you plan to do.

Plans for my gap year:
How will I fund them?
What am I hoping to achieve?
How will this help me with either my degree or university life?

Summary

Finish with a one or two line summary of why you want to go to university and study the course, and why you deserve to be offered a place.

For example:

1. Overall, I am a hardworking, active person and I am enthusiastic about achieving my goals and becoming a primary school teacher. I am looking forward to university life, both academically and socially.
2. I am mature, confident and self-motivated, all qualities that I believe are critical to a successful university experience. I would relish the opportunity to study accounting and finance to degree level and hopefully beyond.
3. I feel certain that this subject will provide me with the intellectual challenge best suited to my personality and ambition of pursuing an academic career in the social sciences. The prospect of studying such a stimulating and dynamic course truly excites me.

Positive Phrasing

It's really important to use positive phrases and key words to link sentences together to combine your experiences with skills. Use the list below to help you.

- Furthermore
- Enable me
- In addition
- Used my initiative
- Thrive under pressure
- Strengthen
- Explore my interests
- Enhances
- Skills I have gained
- The opportunity
- Participated in
- As well as
- I learnt from
- Broadening my interest
- I aspire to
- Particularly enjoyed
- My passion for
- Rewarding
- I was determined to...
- My involvement with...
- This has expanded my knowledge of...
- This has furthered my...
- Commitment
- Taking part in
- Creatively
- Using my initiative
- I undertook
- In addition
- Responsibility
- Efficiently
- Hard work
- Benefit
- My pursuits
- I continue to develop...
- Combining...with...has taught me
- Through attending
- I have acquired skills which
- Developed
- Working effectively
- Has earned me
- Provided an insight
- I have gained a wider awareness of...

Drafting your statement

Look back at all the boxes you have now filled in. This is your basis for your personal statement. Go through with a highlighter and pick out the things that you see as most important, and that the admissions tutors will be most impressed by.

Begin your draft by writing bullet points under the following headings:

- Introduction
- Your interest in the subject (in school)
- Your interest in the subject (out of school)
- Personal/wider skills
- Summary

Once you have this skeleton version you are ready to start writing properly! Talk to your tutor and members of the sixth form team if you need help from here. Mrs Page and Hollie are on hand to give you help with personal statements, whatever stage of the draft you're in, so don't hesitate to ask for support if you need it.

The editing process

Once you have completed your first draft [**remember that deadline: September 12**], you need to hand it in to the sixth form office. Either Hollie or Mrs Page will read it and return it to you, and talk through any suggested amendments or edits.

Subsequent drafts need to go through the same process until you get final approval from Mrs Page to add it to your application.

Please don't be disheartened if you find yourself working on numerous drafts and making many suggested improvements: this is quite normal, and it means you will end up with the best possible statement!

Personal statements: some strong examples

Looking at other people's finished personal statements can be a good starting point if you're uninspired when setting out to write yours.

The following statements were written by some of last year's university applicants. Take a look at them to get an idea of what the end result should look like.

You'll find all or at least most of these key factors have been included in each of these personal statements. Try to make sure you get them all in yours!

- A strong, snappy, interesting introduction.
- Compelling evidence that the applicant is passionate about the subject they are applying to study.
- An idea of what specifically they hope to learn, or how they can further their learning, on the course.
- Explanation of what they hope they will gain from pursuing the subject at degree level, perhaps in terms of a career.
- Useful or relevant skills and experiences gained so far in AS and A2 studies.
- Plenty of evidence and specific examples of a wider interest in the subject beyond school – historical site visits, or reading, for example.
- Mention of one or more hobbies, part-time jobs, and volunteer or work experience placements, and how these have provided useful or relevant skills for studying the subject, or simply for university life.
- A positive picture of the applicant's personality and characteristics in general.
- A concluding paragraph that nearly summarises why the applicant wants to do the course, what they hope to gain from university life, and why they are a suitable candidate.

By all means draw inspiration from other people's efforts. But never copy anything - your personal statement is unique to you, and that means only YOU can write it!

Personal statement for Archaeology and Ancient History courses:

Ancient history reveals some of the most vibrant cultures and vast, amazing empires; archaeology offers us a chance to delve deep into the essence of those cultures and helps us to truly understand them. A trip to Volterra, Italy in 2012 where I visited a Roman Theatre truly sparked my interest in archaeology. Through taking history at GCSE, I already knew that ancient history was the area I was most interested in. As a creative individual, the fact that archaeology is a much more practical side of history brought me to my decision to study a combination of both at degree level. I find the fact that archaeology is history at first hand so exciting, and I look forward to applying the archaeological practices when looking at ancient civilisations in university. I also look forward to using archaeological findings to understand society in a wider context, both in the modern day and ancient history.

The subjects I take at school are largely culture based; for quite some time I searched for a university subject that could tie all of the subjects I take together, but at the time they seemed unrelated. Taking history at AS has expanded my interest, and has greatly improved my essay writing. Drama allowed me to study the development of theatre through time and explore Greek and Roman theatre whilst also improving my public speaking. Media Studies is something that I find deeply interesting and relevant; it has allowed me to look deeper into the culture of today - we cannot truly understand other cultures unless we understand our own. As archaeology is essentially the study of culture, and I am so deeply interested in culture I felt the subjects I take would be a good starting point.

From an early age I was encouraged to take an interest in history, regularly visiting museums, art galleries and historical sites with my family. Museum visits are now a favoured pastime of mine, and I regularly visit the V&A and the National Gallery. Some of the historical sites I have visited include; Sutton Hoo, where I saw the Viking longboat, the Pyramids at Guimar in Tenerife which some, including Thor Heyerdahl, believe to be an Ancient Native site, and Wupatki and Canyon de Chelle, both sites of Ancient Native American settlements in Arizona. Visiting these sites was a truly inspirational experience, and has given me an insight into the archaeology of the sites.

Outside of school I have taken part in a placement with the former curator of Stockport's Staircase House. Being involved in the organisation of temporary exhibitions there really showed me that history was not just a subject I take at school, but something I have a strong passion for. To widen my knowledge of archaeology and to confirm to myself that it is truly the subject I want to take I have read 'Archaeology is Rubbish' by Tony Robinson, 'Lost Worlds' by Alastair Service and 'Archaeological guide to Rome' by Adriano La Regina. As Tony Robinson points out in 'Archaeology is Rubbish'; archaeology was never about discovering "irreplaceable and valuable artefacts", but rather "trawling through a mire of ancient rubbish in order to bring back to life the story of our ancestors".

Being a member of 1st Leighton Buzzard Girls' Brigade since 2003 has given me the ability to work both in a team and independently, as I co-run the explorer section and independently run the senior section. In addition to this, being a member of the Girls' Brigade for such a long time has given me the ability to commit fully to whatever I do.

As a student, I will dedicate myself fully to the course and feel that it is something I am passionate about. I am determined and have a strong need to learn, I feel this course will give me the transferable skills I need for work in the future. If sixth form has taught me anything, it's that in order to succeed and be happy, you need to be interested and have fun with your course. Through taking Ancient History and Archaeology, I intend to do just that at university.

Personal statement for Law courses:

Originally, Law was a time-table filler for me. I had chosen to follow a Media pathway with the intention of becoming a journalist, and had reached the half way point of my first year of Law when my ambitions changed dramatically. I became so interested in the subject, and was adamant I now wanted to have Law as a career choice. Quite simply, I just wanted to know more. The UK's legal system keeps harmony within our country, exercising its importance and power in everyday life; I find the way in which the law is made and used fascinating across all areas, but in particular criminal and family law. It is linked to every aspect of society and I would love the opportunity to play just a small part of that important system.

After realising I had changed my mind on my interests I made the decision to start A levels again, giving me the best opportunity to select the subjects most suited for this journey. I plan to have completed A Levels in English Language, Psychology and of course, Law. I feel that all three subjects complement each other. English Language has developed my essay writing skills as well as my ability to analyse and carry out research for coursework modules, and also to use language effectively. Psychology also requires strong essay writing skills and gives me an insight into how people think. I enjoy writing essays and feel a sense of achievement when they are completed to a high standard. I also gain enjoyment from the problem scenarios that are compulsory for the AQA Law exams; I love the detail and depth of answering the questions and advising on offences and defences. I have taken up the opportunity to further my knowledge and interest in the subject by going on various court visits, and also took part in Law Master Classes at the University of London, covering the topics of family and criminal law. I found these classes to be a little repetitive as I had already studied Law and my peers on the course were just beginning to show an interest in the subject. However, I am pleased I attended these sessions as it reassured me I had made the right decision in pursuing Law at degree level, and as a career. I have also taken the time to read some cases in depth on the BAILII website (British and Irish Legal Information Institute) out of both interest and for a chosen coursework topic in English Language.

I feel I have a wide range of skills that would make me a suitable Law student. Through work in both retail and administration, I have developed the ability to communicate clearly and succinctly in one-to-one situations and also when public speaking. I have also shown an aptitude for working under pressure, meeting deadlines, hitting targets and maintaining a calm appearance. I have demonstrated levels of responsibility through my work with school councils from two of the three schools I have attended. Similarly, I was also a Young Leader which involved working with children, ensuring they become more active and supporting them in any physical way needed. My Young Leader experience gave me leadership skills and showed how my personal organisation and time management ensure that all work tasks and study tasks are carried out efficiently, but also to the best of my ability. Away from work and studying, like the majority of the population, I have a keen interest in baking, and prior to injury, danced competitively for 13 years, winning various awards from all over the country. Socialising with friends and family is important to me and spending quality time with my nieces and nephew provides me with a great deal of pleasure.

I believe I am an open and honest, considerate and helpful individual who can remain calm in the most stressful of situations. I have the determination, personality and deep seated interest in law to make the most of all the opportunities that university will provide me with. My hard working and committed personal ethos will stand me in good stead to achieve well and succeed in my goals.

Personal statement for Culinary Arts and Hospitality courses:

I am at my most confident and relaxed in the kitchen. Baking, for me, is more than just a hobby; it is a coping mechanism at times of stress. The culinary arts have always interested me, but over the years my passion for them has grown strong. I thoroughly enjoy studying Art and Food Technology: now I wish to develop the skills and knowledge I have acquired further still, and pursue a career in some aspect of the hospitality and catering industry. As of yet, I am uncertain which specific career path I will take, but hope to explore my options throughout a relevant course. I feel that my artistic and creative abilities, combined with my good communication and organisational skills, will be the perfect recipe for a career in catering or events.

The prospect of learning more about both theoretical and technical aspects of cooking is exciting. From a young age I have loved developing my own recipes to make exciting new dishes, such as the choux pastry buns with a savoury filling of bacon, herbs and cheese roux sauce that I recently made. I particularly enjoy experimenting with desserts, changing them to make something different and versatile. My Eton Mess Trifle consisted of strawberry Swiss roll, strawberry coulis, cream, natural yoghurt and meringues: two traditional British desserts incorporated to make one delicious new one. I also have a passion for cupcake design, and baking simple breads. Presentation is very important to me, and I aim to make everything I cook a work of art. I get great satisfaction from the process of adding flavour, colour, and other ingredients to create a product, and I relish the moment I present the result.

Various relevant experiences have allowed me an insight into planning and catering for an event. I helped to plan an afternoon tea party for special needs students and their parents, helping to decide on what food and drink would be served and working with the children to prepare a range of cakes, cookies, sandwiches, scones, and drinks. I have also twice been involved in our annual senior citizens' Christmas party. To fund the event we put on a number of bake sales, for which I made a variety of cupcakes, cake pops, muffins and biscuits. We also had to plan a buffet menu, entertainment, decorations and table layout.

I take inspiration from many high-profile chefs, among them Rachel Khoo, who has a huge passion for patisserie and a unique culinary touch, as well as a clear motivation to succeed. The baker Stacie Stewart was self taught, having learnt the basics of cooking for her grandmother, and this is similar to me: much of what I know I learnt from my mother, and from my own research and experimentation. I have watched every series of the Great British Bake Off, challenging myself each week to make the technical bake. One day in my future career I would like to inspire people in the way that these chefs and bakers have inspired me to get baking and creating.

Beyond cooking, I have a strong interest in sports. I have played netball for my local team for the past 8 years, attending training sessions once a week and representing the club in matches every weekend. From this I have learnt how to be a team player and a motivator, and gained confidence, determination and assertiveness.

I have a part time job at a local pharmacy as a counter assistant. The job involves dealing with the public, and recommending the correct medicine or treatment for them. I also have to work on the tills, clean the shop, and hand out customers' prescriptions. This job has given me a new knowledge of medicine by giving me the opportunity to complete a NVQ level 2 in pharmacy service skills. It has also developed my problem solving and communication skills, and taught me the importance of sensitivity and discretion, all of which I am sure will benefit me on my chosen course and ultimately, in my career. I look forward now to making a start on this exciting journey, learning new skills, and gaining new knowledge.

Personal statement for Business courses:

The business world is ever-changing. It is this constant movement and fluctuation that intrigues me, leaving me with the desire to learn more about its workings. My aim is to pursue a career in business, and the best way for me to acquire the knowledge and experience I need to fulfil this goal is to study the subject at degree level. I feel that I have a highly suitable character for studying business, mainly because I have an insatiable desire to learn about and understand the various situations and decisions that a business will have to face. I am a very vocal member of my class and I will always be willing to give answers which show my confidence in my own abilities. I am specifically excited about learning more about the accounting and finance involved in business and how this has a major part to play in the overall running and managing of a company.

I am currently predicted an A in Business Studies at A Level. This course has provided me with the base knowledge needed to succeed in the subject at a higher education level. Combining this with my interest in business as a whole, I feel that I would be extremely suitable to the course. I have particularly found the finance strand of the course to be stimulating, as I thoroughly enjoy working with numbers and figures, deciphering what they can mean for a company. However, I think that combining all of the areas of business into one course is important because it will enable me to explore numerous possibilities for the future, enabling me to grasp any opportunity that I can as a well rounded individual. I hope that a degree course will enable me to work in a variety of different roles, rather than being a specialist in one area.

Alongside A Level Business Studies I also study History, Applied Science and BTEC Sport; these help me across the board because they cover a broad range of different subjects which allows me to expand my knowledge in multiple fields and develop a number of skills that will be useful in a business environment, such as essay planning and writing. Since I study four subjects I have to be able to divide my time up to suit each subject and deliver work to a deadline, therefore I have been able to develop a good level of time management. This is a vital aspect of working in any business.

Social and interpersonal skills are something I feel I have developed through my work as a barman. I am able to mix with and approach people of all ages, and I have grown in confidence after dealing with a variety of situations under pressure, such as aggravated customers who have to be dealt with as quietly and efficiently as possible. This enables me to give answers and speak to other people in a clear and appropriate manner. Working as a barman has also allowed me to gain an insight into how a typical business may be run, especially in relation to human resources, and how an employer deals with an employee.

I have always participated in extra-curricular activities, mainly based around sport, which is another passion of mine. This has enabled me to develop into a determined and confident individual which benefits me now, and potentially in the future. I was a football captain for many years which taught me to communicate with a diverse range of people in the appropriate way, motivating them if they needed assistance. This shows my leadership qualities and also my motivational skills which are important factors when working in a business, especially if you are a manager.

Although the course will be challenging, I look forward to meeting this challenge. My strong determination to succeed and my commitment to achieve as highly as I possibly can drives me to meet my full potential; which I know I could reach studying a Business degree.

Personal statement for Economics courses:

When viewed in a wider context, Economics plays a colossal role not simply in the financial situation of the world, but in a political and social sense also. It is this immeasurable relevance of the subject in so many aspects of the world we live in that has fuelled me with the desire to study the subject at a higher level. In particular, I am interested in the political role that Economics has to play, specifically in the current European climate - this being a subject that profoundly interests and affects me as a person of Turkish descent. Over the current year I have followed developments such as this and other key economic and political issues through my wider reading of the Financial Times. This has equipped me with an expansive knowledge of issues at the present moment. Although Macroeconomics is my main field of interest, I have been able to experience economics in a micro sense through many of extra-curricular activities with which I have been involved.

I spent a period of time completing work experience at a local accountancy firm - Holmes & Co., which allowed me to immerse myself in a small business environment, whilst also providing me with many transferable skills to economics in a broader sense. Furthermore, throughout the current academic year I have been a selected member of Young Enterprise as Head of Marketing and Sales. My main responsibilities in this role have involved me finding, branding and eventually selling products into the market. The process has enabled me to become accustomed to the inner workings of a small business, while also experiencing many 'real-life' economic theories first-hand, an example being Adam Smith's division of labour.

The subjects I have chosen to study have allowed me to develop a good knowledge base and specific skills, which can be integrated well into Economic study. History has honed my key essay writing and research skills - with some knowledge of Economics and Politics covered within these lessons. Mathematics has advanced my analytical problem solving ability and ensured that I have many of the key numerical skills required within Economics. By studying Economics at A-level, I have gained a clear understanding and motivation to further develop my study of the subject. Although I was disappointed with my AS-grades, as I was aware that they did not reflect my full potential, I am adamant that with certain re-sits and work in the current academic year I am more than capable of achieving and surpassing my target grades. To further supplement this, I am also completing General Studies as full A-level along with an AS-level in Turkish, both of which I am taking in my free time.

In my spare time I enjoy remaining physically active. I am a member of a football team, a karate association and was formerly a member of a swimming team. To gain practical work skills, I also have a part-time job alongside my work as a fully qualified FA referee. I am currently completing my Duke of Edinburgh Silver award and am hoping to have the Gold completed by the end of the academic year. Alongside this I have completed the NCS (National Citizenship Service) award, which with the Duke of Edinburgh Award has increased my ability to communicate efficiently within a group as well as taking a leadership role when required.

Throughout Sixth Form I have been a prominent member of the senior student team. I am sure I would be a model student because of my hard work and commitment. By completing a degree in Economics, I hope in the near future to gain the marketable and diverse skills that are required to begin my own business, or an alternate career in politically motivated economics. Although the content of the course may not be considered 'necessary' to fulfil these aims, the broad context with which economics covers such a diverse range of real-world issues has ignited an eagerness within me to pursue the subject to degree level.

Personal statement for Psychology and Media courses:

Six years ago, when my Grandad died, I noticed a remarkable change in my Nan. The formerly happy, thoughtful woman I loved turned into a forgetful, anxious and depressed person. Being intrinsically inquisitive, this drove me to try to discover why life events and memories from childhood can affect an individual so much that they change their behaviour. I was intrigued by the way the Clinical Psychologist my Nan met with was helping her through her depression using cognitive behavioural therapy.

Depression is increasingly affecting the society in which we live and I believe that finding an effective way to help individuals cope with everyday situations in times of stress is crucial. With levels of unemployment higher than ever, breakdown in what was considered to be normal family life becoming more common place and many people struggling with the recession, psychologists must surely be needed. I am passionate in thinking that a degree in Psychology and Media will not only aid me to learn about human nature, it will help me to identify the ways in which the Media affects individuals lives through social networking, advertising and television programmes. I am a caring and compassionate person and am looking forward to studying Psychotherapy and Counselling modules as I feel that this will motivate me to develop these skills in a more positive dimension. As well as this I am particularly interested in the Mediated World modules because as the media blur the lines between the virtual and real world, people don't know who to believe anymore.

It's probably a cliché to say that my teachers have inspired me to take this subject on at degree level, but they have. My psychology teacher got me interested right from the start of the course, using innovative ways of learning the five key approaches to psychology. One of my media teachers was in the journalism industry before becoming a teacher. His knowledge of the subject is vast and I loved learning about what working in the media is really like.

In my spare time I help out at my local church's Sunday school. I work with children aged 5 and 6 helping them to develop by teaching them how to complete word searches and answer questions from a text. This allows me to see theories in Psychology such as Samuel and Bryant's study of conservation as well as Bandura's Role Models study in action. I also enjoy watching crime dramas and situation comedies on television, and I feel that through this I have expanded my knowledge of how people react in certain situations and what leads a person to commit a crime. Whilst looking at the psychological aspects of these shows, I enjoy spotting the typical codes and conventions of crime dramas that they present, and admire the way they are directed.

I have gained numerous skills from working part-time in a local shoe shop. Initially I was trained in fitting shoes and taught about the importance of accuracy and precision. I now also handle cash and work the till which has developed my trustworthiness and responsibility. I speak to people from all walks of life from the youngest to the oldest and being inquisitive offered me the opportunity to find the ideal product for each customer. Learning languages has greatly developed my communication skills, giving me a taste of other cultures. Last year I visited Romania with my youth group and spent time learning the language before I went. This gave me a better understanding of the surroundings I was in, and enabled me to fit in with the locals.

I believe that a degree involving Psychology and Media would be beneficial to whatever I go on to do after University, as the statistical analysis and writing reports that I will learn are valuable and transferrable skills. Overall I am a hardworking, friendly person who enjoys meeting new people. I am looking forward to the University experience, both academically and socially. I feel the opportunity of being away from home will vastly help to develop my personality.

Personal statement for Sport Development and Coaching courses:

Sport is my overwhelming passion in life. I have always hoped to make a career of it, specifically in teaching, and now my aim is to learn all I can about the practical application of coaching and sport development, by pursuing the subject at degree level.

A module I am particularly interested in within the Sport Development and Coaching course is Sport Strategy. Playing golf, I have always had to be aware of my own games strategy, whether relating to my golf swing or my strength of mind. I have also been interested in sport psychology since studying psychology at AS level. I had a number of mind lessons with the England National Golf Team and with my club's resident golf professional, in which we learnt how to use our minds appropriately to suit our game. For example, one theory was to keep your mind in the present, so you can focus on your current shot, and not think about the future because you may get distracted from what you are about to do.

As part of my BTEC sport course, I have taken part in a work experience unit where I lead a small group of youngsters in lessons. This taught me the importance of being imaginative, and being able to work spontaneously to improve a session. I have also taken part in the Young Leaders scheme which offered me the chance to help out in primary schools. I set up and ran activities ranging from teaching the participants to throw bean bags into hoops, to running sports day. This was extremely beneficial as I learnt how to work as part of a team as well as developing my skills as a class leader. At both middle and upper school I earned the accolade sports woman of the year, due to my outstanding effort and participation.

At school I have played in a variety of teams, including our hockey, netball and football squads. This improved my communication and team working skills as I was always using them in order to allow a game to run smoothly. I have always enjoyed being part of a team, and this is something I think will stand me in good stead at university, both inside and outside of my studies. I have been playing golf since I was ten, and have represented the county – an amazing experience which has taken me all over the country for different competitions. Last year I was offered the position of my golf club's junior captain, which I feel was a privilege and a reward for my efforts. The role has enhanced my leadership skills and taught me how to delegate appropriately to my team mates, varying between autocratic and democratic styles. As I have to talk in front of large, diverse audiences at all kinds of events, it has also developed my public speaking skills, and hugely boosted my confidence. My other hobby is dance, and I've been part of the same group for 13 years, performing in shows both locally and nationwide. You must be organised to remember a routine, and you must be confident to go on stage and perform. This too has demanded commitment, hard work and confidence.

I am a sociable person; any spare time I have that's not devoted to sport or dance is spent relaxing with friends. I also have a part time job at Leighton Buzzard Golf Club, where I am a waitress. Given my enthusiasm for the sport, I couldn't hope for a better place of employment. I have been working there since the age of sixteen, and this has helped with my social and professional skills.

I fully intend to enjoy University and make the most of the experience as a whole whether this is in a society, playing in a team or in my Sport Development and Coaching class. I am positive and highly motivated, and aim to achieve my very best in any task given. The commitment I have demonstrated in my extra-curricular activities and within school show that my personal motivation is faultless. I believe that I am a suitable candidate for the course due to my strong dedication to sport development, and my enthusiasm for a career in teaching.

Personal statement for Primary Education courses:

I dream of being the teacher that can inspire hope, ignite the imagination and instil a love of learning. The importance of primary education in society is clear to me as it lays the foundation for every child's learning experience and I would find it highly rewarding to encourage the best in every child. Being selected for this course is my immediate goal: as well as providing an excellent grounding in the practical and theoretical aspects of teaching, I believe it will help me develop the strength of character required in all good primary school teachers.

Although I have completed previous placements in primary schools, I was keen to get further experience in the classroom and gain a greater understanding of a teacher's roles and responsibilities, which was why I took a gap year. I began volunteering at a lower school in September, working with 6-7 year olds; my intention is to have worked with all key stages by the end of the academic year. My role is practically that of an unpaid TA, I both supervise and lead group activities set by the teacher: these may be comprehension tasks, role play activities or basic maths problem solving. Leading group activities has taught me how to control situations and gain full concentration from children: for this I must use effective communication, and a firm but fair approach to engage them in the task. For example, I had to help children prepare a news report on a book they had read, assisting them to prepare a script, divide roles within the group and use conventions of a news report. The activity produced excitement and some silly behaviour which I had to control to ensure the work was done.

I am often asked to work with children on a one to one basis, listening to them read for example. After a recent lesson on number ordering, I had to help them put number blocks in order from lowest to highest. This taught me how important it is to monitor progress and made me aware of different strategies for assessment. I have also managed the class alone on numerous occasions, having been given full responsibility for activities such as reading aloud and taking a starter about shapes, among others. I have gained further experience with children through babysitting, family events and helping my 12-year-old neighbour on a regular basis with her homework. The satisfaction gained from all these experiences has confirmed just how much I want to pursue teaching as a career and how vital it is for me to secure a place at university. The fact that the course offers advanced experience in a classroom setting particularly excites me as it will further my insight into the rich variety of cultural and linguistic influences, religious beliefs and social diversity to be found within the average class. I am also keen to learn more about the National Curriculum and the many different ways this learning framework can be taught to young children.

All three of my A level subjects offer transferrable skills for studying education at degree level. Health and Social Care in particular has enabled me to understand how humans develop through infancy: this knowledge helps me to relate to children. Media Studies has furthered my creative side by planning, preparing and executing different types of media texts; I believe this will help me to deliver creative lessons for all learners. Finally, English Language enhanced my understanding of language development which means I now have a deeper understanding of how to appropriately support language in the classroom. In addition to this, the course structure of English Language has enhanced my research and analytical skills which is excellent preparation for university.

I believe that my character and the considerable experience I have already gained give me a significant head start as a potential candidate. I am approachable, confident, patient and caring: vital attributes for teaching. Primary education is my vocation, and the time has come to pursue it.

Personal statement for English courses:

A writer's ability to transport the mind of a reader into a fantasy world or to evoke any of their emotions through both their stories and characters has always been something that has fascinated, inspired and enticed me into the vast world of English literature and language. The art of escapism is something that I believe is important; the opportunity to get away from ordinary life and become engaged in a new world through literature has constantly tempted me from a young age, as has the chance to evolve and develop my imagination to allow me to create better mental images of the stories being presented in various works of literature.

Reading has always been an important pastime throughout my life. Even from a young age, reading books such as Anthony Horowitz's 'Alex Rider' series, Philip Pullman's 'His Dark Materials' and Christopher Paolini's 'Inheritance Cycle', engrossed and excited me. I would, and still do, impatiently wait for the release of sequels for whichever book series I am captured in.

English hasn't always been the subject that I was most keen to study; my interest in the subject has developed along with the novels I've read for both educational purposes, for example 'Strange Meeting' by Susan Hall and 'Property' by Valerie Martin, and for pleasure. Novels such as 'The Magus' by John Fowles, 'Frankenstein' by Mary Shelley and 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time' by Mark Haddon provide more mature plots aimed at an older audience but still offer an enthralling story, which has enhanced my reading ability and my appreciation of the English language and the potential effects of its use. This talent and ability that a writer has to be able to captivate and entertain an audience is inspiring and is one of the reasons why I am interested in taking my study of English to a higher level.

I feel that my other A Level choices have effortlessly integrated together to provide me with skills which will aid me in my progress during University. For example, my study of History has equipped me with the knowledge and ability to write cogent essays. It also provides me with a broader historical context of texts studied in English. The studying of World War 1 in History complemented my reading of 'Strange Meeting' and allowed me to better assimilate the traumatic experiences of people involved in the War to connect with characters on an emotional level as well as assisting my means to interpret the purpose of the novel. My decision to study Business Studies has given me the capability to research a given topic independently and effectively to be able to make my own decisions and come to my own judgements. This has helped my ability to develop my own individual ideas when studying texts and to research background knowledge on texts which is not provided in classes.

In my spare time I play football on Sundays, which has helped develop my team working skills, my ability to communicate effectively and my decision making skills. I take pleasure in pushing myself to achieving the best result for both me and my team members. I also have a part time job as a Shop Floor Assistant at a local Waitrose which requires me to be able to meet deadlines and complete tasks to the highest quality. I strive to complete jobs to the best of my ability when working and enjoy the feeling of pride I get upon receiving praise for my effort.

I believe that I will thrive in a University environment and develop both academically and socially to continue to improve my understanding of English Language and its use in modern day society. Even though I'm not currently sure what employment I want to go into after University, I feel that an English degree would give me a wide range of opportunities and allow me to keep my options open until I find a job I'd be happy in.

Personal statement for Tourism Management courses:

The thrill of travel kicked in on my first flight, aged 12, on a family holiday to Jersey. Seeing the world from a view of 30,000 feet above Earth triggered my ambition to experience it in more depth when I was older. For me, the pleasure of travel comes from absorbing the diverse surroundings, lifestyles and standards of living of different countries. What draws me to tourism is that it is such a dynamic part of the world economy, and a major human activity. With so many airlines, travel agencies, hotels, companies and resorts around the world, the career options are endless, and as I am undecided about which specific path to take, I hope to explore some of them whilst working towards a degree in Tourism Management.

I am looking forward to gaining a broad perspective of the subject whilst on the course. In particular, I am keen to learn more about the role of tourism in modern lifestyles, and to develop an in-depth knowledge of business-related aspects of the industry such as marketing, managing finance and human resources. Having studied Business Studies at GCSE I have a good basic knowledge of business principles which I am sure will stand me in a good stead when looking into these areas. Aspects of the tourism management course that I am looking forward to exploring include event managing, promotions, merchandising, sales techniques and an optional work placement as part of the course. The course will develop my knowledge and give me a wider experience of what the career entails and I am willing to take every opportunity to get me one step further towards getting the best possible degree.

My first part-time job was delivering papers aged 13: with a daily 6am start, it provided a useful early lesson in good customer service. Subsequently, I have worked for two major retailers - as a temporary customer service advisor for Argos, and as a store colleague for my current employers Pets at Home. Both of these positions have allowed me to work independently, use my initiative, and develop good communication skills. Having to deal with unsatisfied customers at times has opened my eyes to the challenges of providing a service, and given me valuable experience of conducting myself and communicating with people in awkward situations. A full-time placement at a local hair and beauty salon provided a further opportunity to develop all these attributes. Over the years I have been involved in numerous extra-curricular sporting activities including swimming, tennis, netball and football. As a member of British Gymnastics, I have developed team work skills, and shown commitment and determination - securing the titles 'County Champion' and 'Regional Champion' were highlights that gave me a real sense of achievement. I have also worked as a coach to younger gymnasts, teaching them basic skills and working to gain their trust and reliance, and helped out at school in our Sports Leadership Academy. Dance is my other passion. I have been a member of the same dance school since I was three and taken part in many public performances, which has been a great confidence booster. For the last 5 years, I have offered my time as a volunteer, teaching younger members basic dance skills.

Throughout school, I have taken part in many dance performances, and in the sixth form I have been involved in several of our charity fund-raising activities. From these, I have developed confidence and independence, and skills such as good time management. In my spare time, I enjoy going to the gym, socialising with a wide network of friends, shopping and listening to music.

As a very motivated individual I believe I would be a great candidate for the course. I am looking forward to my time at University and the opportunities I hope it will open up for me. I will not only be there to gain a qualification but to aid my personal development and prepare for the future.

Personal statement for Geography courses:

I am intrigued that one subject can influence so many strands of life. Geography examines the relationship between the natural world and the influence of mankind, as well as many other diverse issues that are critical for our planet: poverty in the African continent; the impact of globalisation and the need for alternatives to our disappearing fossil fuels, for example. My long standing fascination with such matters has led me to study Geography at AS and A2, deepening my curiosity further still, and taking a degree course in Geography is the next step.

A variety of school trips in Geography have developed my practical field skills, and theory lessons have enabled me to further develop my desire to study Geography in its physical form. A trip to Brighton enabled me to gather data and then analyse the actual results. We used a variety of techniques such as surveys and focus groups and also long shore drift measurements. This allowed us to judge the area and how it may have changed from either physical factors or human intervention. I really enjoyed the trip as it allowed for more hands-on approach. The results I collected showed that the human influence upon Brighton were far greater than physical influences. All of my AS subjects link to Geography. The use of texts and extended writing in History help with essay writing and source analysis, which has proved useful through the A-level course.

The work in Biology also helps with practical skills but also allows me to develop an understanding on the effects of the living world. General Studies has helped me to broaden my horizons on common day issues ranging from religion to politics. Taking this additional A level course in my free time proves how hardworking and committed I am.

I have had the luxury of many holidays abroad; I found the United States of America interesting, but my most memorable holiday was to the Indonesian island of Bali. I stayed on the island for three weeks, during which I scuba-dived around the luscious beaches. The wildlife was amazing, however there was a lack of diversity especially as we dived by the coral reef. During the dive I noticed that the coral was white and this intrigued me. I researched the issue further and discovered that it was due a slight change in the sea temperature which affects the nutrients and conditions for effective photosynthesis. This is what caused coral bleaching. Exploring what I found and seeing the link to Geography and the effects it has on the life around us has only reinforced my passion for studying Geography at degree level. I have also assisted a local middle school in a week long school trip to Blue Peris, helping with activities such as orienteering. This task reinforced my organisational and communication skills. Doing my gold Duke of Edinburgh award included volunteering in the community, physical preparedness and skills improvement. The completion of these has influenced my determination and team working abilities. Next year I intend to participate in the Crees expedition to Peru for four weeks.

My extracurricular pursuits include gymnastics: I am member of the Milton Keynes squad, training for 12 hours a week. This hobby has taught me many valuable lessons in team work and co-operation, as well as self-discipline, perseverance and determination. I have gone on to work at this centre as an official coach and receptionist which allows me to gain more confidence when talking to people in a formal manner. I gained first aid at work an additional sports first aid qualification and finally my British Gymnastics level 1 men's artistic coach.

My experiences have taught me many lessons and helped me to become a well rounded student. The thought of studying Geography at a higher level and furthering my knowledge in a subject I love is amazing. Putting it simply, I would love to study "the Why of Where".

Personal statement for Sport Psychology courses:

Sport has always played an important role in my life, and has given me the confidence and self-esteem to face challenges and strive for achievement. I am passionate about sport in general, playing a range of sports on a regular basis, including basketball, cricket, football and tennis. However, my particular love is golf, which I have played since the age of 10.

Playing golf at county level and realising how much of a role psychology has in the sport has made me want to pursue a degree in Sports Psychology. As a young black man myself, Tiger Woods has been an idol and an inspiration to me, as he has excelled in such a predominantly white sport. The recent issues in Wood's personal life and the corresponding deterioration of his performance have highlighted to me the significance that other factors, such as the media, have on elite athletes' performance. I would like to develop this interest further within this degree, to give me the skills to work with elite athletes in individual pursuits, particularly within the sports I love: golf and boxing.

At present I am studying Psychology and a BTEC in Sport. I believe getting a grounding in these two subjects will give me the skills and knowledge to bring these together to excel in a degree in Sports Psychology. In both of these subjects I have developed practical and academic skills. For example, I have led sporting events, such as sports day and tournaments. I also lead sessions with younger children with Milton Monkey, a company that provides personal development to children through sport. This demonstrates excellent organisational skills and an ability to lead my peers and younger students. I have learnt how to analyse sporting performances and then write reports and essays to clearly communicate what I have to say. Through my learning I have become confident in writing and using evidence to make my argument.

I have excelled at golf from a young age. I was the youngest ever Junior Scratch Champion of Whipsnade Golf Club in 2008. I was also Dunstable Downs Scratch Junior Champion in 2010. These achievements have taught me patience and commitment, which I use in other areas of my life, including my academic work.

I have represented Hertfordshire at golf and my school at basketball, showing that I also work well within a team. I am a member of two golf clubs, have a part-time job as a green keeper (showing attention to detail, hard work and commitment), and did work experience in a golf shop, all demonstrating excellent time-management skills. I have taken every opportunity to better understand golf and have tried to immerse myself in every aspect of the golfing community. Golf has led me to socialise and play with hundreds of different people from all walks of life, many of them very different from me. I am therefore comfortable and confident in new environments and feel that this will be an asset when I start the course.

As well as golf, I have also developed a passion for boxing. I regularly travel to fights across the country, being a big Team Fury fan. I'm really interested in the psychological factors that are linked with boxing, such as how the build up to a fight plays such a big part in the fight itself. I follow Team Fury on Twitter and am interested in studying how new social media will continue to influence sports psychology.

I have shown passion and focus in my commitment to my own personal development. I am committed to reaching my goals and believe that a degree in Sports Psychology is the next step in this journey. I am proud of what I have achieved so far, having had to deal with family situations that most other children have not had to face. I believe that my personal achievements despite these hurdles have made me both mature and responsible. I want to continue to achieve and become a role-model for future young people and be the first person in my family to go to university. I am confident that I will flourish in this degree and am very excited about it.

Tips for attending an open day

1: Book Your Place: It may sound obvious, but you need to make sure you know when and where university open days are taking place. If a university has multiple campuses or departments, for example, make sure that the Open Day you are attending is relevant to the course of your choice. You will almost certainly need to book your place on an Open Day too (it shouldn't cost you anything but universities need an idea of numbers), so make sure you have filled in all the appropriate paperwork before you turn up.

2: Give yourself plenty of time: You need to find out how long it will take to get to the universities you want to see, particularly if they are in towns or cities with which you are not familiar. While an Open Day is very different from an interview (so relax!), you don't want to feel flustered on the day so make sure you're not rushing around before you get to meet the people who may end up teaching you for three or four years! It's also a good idea to get a feel for the area around the campus; so give yourself some extra time to have a walk or drive around if at all possible.

3: Do some research: You will have researched your course before applying, naturally, but you want to make sure that you get to grips with the specifics that each university offers. While an Open Day is a great opportunity to get to know the campus and the area, it's also a chance to ask questions about the course. By doing as much research as possible, online and in prospectuses, you can make sure you're not wasting the opportunity to by asking about something you can easily find out beforehand.

4: Prepare some questions: During an Open Day you will often have an opportunity to mix with both staff and existing students. This is a perfect chance to find out what it might really be like to live and study at a particular institution. By having a think about everything you might want to know before you get to your Open Day there is less chance of you forgetting something crucial when you're there. The people running Open Days will have heard every question under the sun before; so don't be shy and ask them anything that you think might be crucial to your decision.

5: Find out as much as you can about the open day before you go: What are your main concerns about starting uni? The course? Accommodation? Costs? An Open Day can be the perfect opportunity to put your mind at rest about all of these issues, but only if you make the most of it. If there is something that you particularly want to know about but you're not sure whether it will be covered at the Open Day, why not phone up and ask? Often, if it is not part of the official programme, they will be able to put you in touch with someone who will be happy to speak to you about your concerns on the day.

Tips for attending an interview

What will the interview be like?

Interviews can range from an 'exam out loud' (it's safe to expect this from an Oxbridge interview) to an informal chat designed to encourage you to choose that course. They can last anything from ten minutes to an hour and are usually, though not always, conducted by one interviewer.

They can also vary depending on the subject you're applying to study – for example, English students may have to discuss a poem; maths applicants might be asked to solve an equation.

Whatever the format of your interview, there should be a two-way interaction. Make sure you not only respond to what your interviewer asks you, but contribute to the discussion. There is no such thing as the perfect interview, or the perfect answer to a question an interviewer might throw at you. As much as possible, just try to relax and see it as an opportunity to discuss a subject you and your interviewer share an interest in.

What are interviewers looking for?

Above all, tutors want to see that you're genuinely enthusiastic about your subject. Your application has done enough to persuade them so far, so try to just be yourself.

Tutors may ask you to expand on any claims you made in your personal statement which demonstrate your particular interest in the subject – any extra research or work experience you've done, for example – so make sure your statement stands up to scrutiny.

Here are some tips from universities on what else interviewers want to see:

University of Bristol: 'They will ask about your reasons for wanting to study that particular subject, and make sure you're aware of what the course involves and what the career options are. They will also assess your ability to communicate and cope with stress.'

University of Kent: 'Interviewers will expect you to show some knowledge of the course and university, and have the ability to present your ideas and arguments well.'

University of Oxford: 'They are looking for evidence that you are thinking independently, that you are willing to engage with new ideas beyond the scope of your school or college syllabus, and that you are committed to your subject.'

Interview tips: what you might get asked about

- Revisit the university prospectus and course details, thinking about how you'd answer questions such as 'why this course?' and 'why this university?'
- Re-familiarise yourself with your personal statement and be prepared to elaborate on anything you've said.
- Get someone (who hopefully knows a bit about your subject) to give you a mock interview. Having some interview practice beforehand will help to boost your confidence and expose areas you need to work on.
- Make sure you're aware of the latest issues in current affairs relevant to your subject – tutors may bring these into the discussion.
- Prepare some questions to ask tutors – just make sure that they haven't already been answered in information you've been sent by the university.

Interview tips: the practical prep

- Look carefully through any material that is sent to you before the interview, so you know what to expect when you arrive.
- Make sure you have something suitable to wear. The university may offer dress code recommendations, but if not, dress in something you feel comfortable in that won't distract the interviewer from the points you want to make.
- Plan your journey. If an overnight stay is involved, plan for this as well. To avoid extra stress, give yourself plenty of time on the day to get there.

Pointers for the day

- It's not just what you say that's important – body language is key to the impression you'll make. Sit up straight, make eye contact and look (and sound!) interested. It's important to engage with the interviewer right from the start.
- Let your interviewer take the lead when it comes to handshakes, sitting down, starting to talk, and so on.
- Listen carefully to the question and don't be afraid to take some time to think about your answer or ask them to repeat it – you won't be penalised!
- Remember, an interview is a two-way process. Make the most of it by finding out as much as you can about the course (including teaching methods) and getting a feel for whether the course and the university are right for you.

Student Finance – what you need to know!

- There are two types of costs that students need to budget for to study at university or college: tuition fees and living costs. Loans are available for eligible full-time students for both these costs, and living cost grants can contribute to living costs for full-time students from lower income households.
- Tuition fees are the amount universities or colleges will charge you each year to study. They vary depending on where you study and what you study.
- Publicly-funded universities and colleges in England can continue to charge new full-time students up to £9,000 a year in 2015/16. There are no restrictions on the amount private colleges or universities can charge.
- If you're planning to study for your first higher education course, you can get a government loan for your tuition fees. Students can get a loan for the full tuition fee for publicly-funded institutions, and for up to £6,000 for private ones.

Living cost loans

- Living cost loans are available to contribute towards the cost of accommodation, food and travel.
- What you'll receive will depend on your personal circumstances. The maximum amounts for 2015/16 (at the time of printing) are:

Where you live and study	Loan for courses from September 2014
You live at home	Up to £4,418
You live away from home and study outside London	Up to £5,555
You live away from home and study in London	£7,751
You spend a year of a UK course studying overseas	Up to £6,600

Maintenance grants for living costs

If you're a full-time student you could qualify for a living cost grant. Living cost grants don't have to be paid back.

New full-time students can receive:

- The maximum grant of £3,387 a year, if your household income is £25,000 or less
- A partial grant if your household incomes is between £25,001 and £42,620

Full-time student – household income	Grants for courses from September 2014
£25,000 or less	£3,387
£30,000	£2,441
£35,000	£1494
£40,000	£547

Bursaries, grants and scholarships

If your household income is not more than £25,000 per year you may get help through the new National Scholarship Programme. Each university decides what support they'll offer, so you'll need to check to see what your chosen university is offering and whether you're eligible.

Most universities also offer their own financial help through bursaries, grants and scholarships, with the onus on the student to find out what's available, where. They're based on all sorts of eligibility criteria – not just academic ability or financial need, as is widely assumed - and many thousands of pounds go unclaimed because people don't know about them! So it may well be worth your while doing some research, to see if any funds are available to you.

Other help

Extra financial help is available to disabled students, to full-time students with dependent children, and to full-time students with adult dependents.

Interest on your loans

You're charged interest on your loan from the time you get your first payment in university until you pay your loan back in full.

The amount of interest you're charged varies (see the table). The actual interest rates depend on the rate of inflation.

Your annual income	Interest rate on your loan
While you're studying	Rate of inflation plus 3%
£21,000 or less	Rate of inflation
£21,000 to £41,000	Rate of inflation plus up to 3%
£41,000 and over	Rate of inflation plus 3%

How much are the repayments?

You repay your loans back at a rate of nine per cent of your income over £21,000. So if your salary is £25,000 a year, you pay nine per cent of £4,000, which is £30 a month.

Your income per year	Monthly repayments
£21,000 and under	No repayments
£25,000	£30
£30,000	£67
£40,000	£142
£50,000	£217

You become liable to repay in the April after you leave your course, but you only have to repay if you earn over £21,000. No-one will be required to repay the loan before April 2018. Slightly different arrangements exist for part-time students – see the section on part-time study below.

Your monthly repayment will be based on what you earn, not how much you borrowed. Repayments will normally be deducted from your pay packet through the tax system.

You can pay back all or some of your loan at any time. There is no charge for early repayment.

Part-Time Students

Loans are now available to English students studying in the UK to cover the cost of part-time student fees at publicly-funded institutions. Maximum tuition loans for part-time students will be £6,750 for publicly-funded institutions and £4,500 for private ones.

You will become liable to repay in the April that falls four years after the start date of your course, or in the April after you leave your course, whichever is sooner. You only have to repay if you earn over £21,000. From the date you are liable to repay, your interest rate will be variable and will depend on your income.

How and When To Apply for Student Finance

You will be able to apply online for student finance from early 2015. Tuition fee loans are paid directly to your university or college. Any Maintenance Loans or Maintenance Grants for full-time students will be paid into your bank account.

To get your student finance in place for the start of the term, you will need to apply by the spring 2015 deadline. More details will be available later this year.

You will receive much more information from your tutor and from the sixth form team before it is time to apply – and any help you need to make your application.