

WEALD OF KENT GRAMMAR SCHOOL

6TH FORM



UCAS PERSONAL STATEMENT

PLANNING BOOKLET 2022

The UCAS Personal Statement is possibly the single most important document that you will ever write. In an increasingly competitive world, the statement is your first chance to impress: it is a letter, job application, CV and interview all in one.

Some key information:

- Character and line limit: 4000 characters including spaces (Word document) and 47 lines.
- When university Admissions Tutors read your statement, it helps them decide whether to offer you a place on your chosen course or offer you an interview.
- Your fundamental aim is to demonstrate to the universities that you really want to study their course and that, academically, you are ready to do so. They want to know what type of student you are going to be and why they should make you an offer.
- You must showcase your motivation and enthusiasm, as well as giving them an insight into your personality and interests beyond the purely academic.
- Make sure it is at least 70% subject and course based and approximately 30% relevant wider interests.
- Make sure you know about the course: read the prospectus. Use course descriptions to help you reflect the skills that they desire from students.
- When applying to competitive courses, it can be beneficial to have an overarching theme to your Personal Statement. For example: that could be justice for Law; democracy for Politics; and revolutions for History.

You will be allocated a UCAS Mentor who will oversee the drafting and redrafting of your Personal Statement.

There will be deadlines for submission of your draft Personal Statement before the finished one is submitted. Ensure you meet those deadlines to avoid delay in your application being sent.

USEFUL LINKS

[How and what to write](#)

[Personal statement FAQs](#)

[Preparing your Personal Statement](#)

[Personal Statement worksheet](#)

[Top Universities: How to write a UCAS Personal Statement](#)

[How to structure your Personal Statement](#)

Important Deadlines

Closing date for Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine Applications:

Weald deadline: 23 September 2022

UCAS deadline: 15 October 2022

All other UCAS applications:

Weald deadline: 1 November 2022

UCAS deadline: 25 January 2023

Deadline for applications to UCAS Conservatoires (music, art, drama, dance, musical theatre, film and production courses):

Please note, conservatoires can have different deadlines, so please check each conservatoire's website.

If you are applying to a conservatoire via UCAS Conservatoires, please contact the relevant Head of Department for a reference.

Please allow 2-3 weeks for the processing of applications from the point you pay for your UCAS application (see point 15 in your Application Guide).

Please remember, some courses require admissions tests, which have their own registration deadlines. Please check with our Examinations Officer for all Admissions Tests, including Oxbridge.

FIRST DRAFT FINAL TIPS

Make sure you:

- Allow yourself time to write and rewrite
- Draft in Word so you can check spelling, punctuation and grammar
- Apply a sound logic and structure
- Read your statement aloud.

'A long, generic list is much less impressive than picking up one or two things you have experienced and writing about the skills you learned from them'. Durham University

Some useful phrases are: as well as, besides, in addition to, not only, but also, more recently, not to mention, enabled me, opportunity to, provided me, reinforced, strengthened, encouraged, allowed and instilled within me.

- Use the exemplar Personal Statements provided in this booklet to help
- Meet with your UCAS Mentor for advice – minimum of 2 meetings between April and July.
- Ask a family member to proofread it for you
- Do not plagiarise, they will know.

The Head of Department related to the subject you are choosing will write your teacher reference.

Meet with them to keep them informed of your decision making and choices.

You will also be allocated a senior teacher who will be overseeing your UCAS application.

Some final thoughts when applying to prestigious universities:

- Think about the impact of your opening paragraph
- Have an overarching theme
- Write about what you have learned
- Experiences are key. Do something relevant to your prospective course of study
- Include new and interesting developments
- No typos or shortened words (I'm, I've, Can't)

If you need help, email: apring@wealdgs.org or mrichardson@wealdgs.org

EXEMPLAR PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Please use these examples for inspiration but remember that every student's personal statement is unique. Your style and content will be different and that is important for your application. Remember that any university interviews are likely to be based on what you have written, so make sure that you can talk confidently about what you have included.

Example 1

Through studying multiple subjects, I wish to engage with many different ways of thinking, in order to face contemporary challenges. When completing a MOOC on 'Dementia and the Arts', the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to treatment became clear to me. I discovered that treating illness from within a scientific bubble ignored the benefits that creative pursuits like acting had on the lives of patients.

I find challenges like this in society fascinating, which is why I love Literature. My favourite novel is Bronte's 'Villette' which I feel exemplifies how the Brontes intelligently challenged the politics of their time through their deep exploration of female character. I also find 'Wuthering Heights' intriguing as Bronte utilises Catherine Earnshaw's strong character to reshape the way in which women of her time were perceived. Recently, I have enjoyed Acevedo's powerful novel 'The Poet X' which portrays the interconnection between strong religious conviction and the oppression of women in contemporary society while further exploring the hardships black workers in the US face, cleverly illustrating the complexities of these issues.

I love thinking about the future of humanity and hence enjoyed Huxley's 'Brave New World', a world that seems almost possible in Ball's 'How to Grow a Human'. Scientific advancements such as genetic engineering make this an exciting time to consider the ethics of Science and the nature of our lives. I pursued this interest by taking Kagan's Open Yale course on the philosophy of death which helped me to reconsider the possibility of a human soul as well as to discover some philosophical techniques like inference to the best explanation. I think studying people is fascinating and independent study has demonstrated how this encompasses so many disciplines. For example, Stephens-Davidowitz's 'Everybody Lies' was the catalyst for my interest in Anthropology and I feel his reliance on 'Big Data' from Google presents exciting new ideas about the methods we can use to understand ourselves.

Studying my A Levels first made me appreciate the interconnections between subjects. For example, Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale' was partly inspired by her experiences of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The rise of extremist sects like this is made possible by group obedience illustrated in psychological studies by Milgram. Knowledge of the Cold War and The Communist Manifesto, greatly added to my understanding of Orwell's 'Animal Farm' as a critique of Communist equality. Through my study of 'King Lear' in English, I became interested in philosophy. McFaul's lecture 'Shakespeare Mind and World' helped me see that the questions of justice and morality found in 'King Lear' can only be truly appreciated in the philosophical context of the time. Shakespeare wrote in the Renaissance, a time I know from History was a time of societal changes and hence fostered an inquisitive philosophical atmosphere which likely contributed to the 'gappiness' in Shakespeare's plays, as Smith terms it.

I am passionate about independent learning which is evident through my completion of an EPQ and my Distinction in the ESB Presentation Award. I explored topics of child corporal punishment and male suicide rates which are highly emotive and my research has improved my confidence in presenting both sides of an argument. I am a confident communicator, willing to participate in extracurricular groups like debate club. I am an approachable person and as Peer Mentoring Prefect I support younger students academically and pastorally. Outside of school, I volunteer at a charity shop and love to dance, meaning that I am used to working with others and good at balancing my time. Dance has also helped me to become dedicated to improving my skills and able to work well under pressure. Ultimately, I want to help solve the problems of the future and I believe to do this relies on thinking creatively, beyond the boundaries of a single approach.

Example 2

As a child I would visit Herstmonceux observatory. Learning about the experiments instilled a sense of wonder in me and prompted my love for Maths and Physics.

I want to discover more about the universe through my own research, my focus being on Theoretical Physics and Cosmology as these branches are founded upon and explained through the language of Mathematics. I am eager to explore big questions such as: what is dark matter and energy? I can grasp mathematical concepts with ease, enabling me to reach a deeper understanding when learning ideas in Physics. In my extra-curricular research so far, I have developed my understanding of our current physical models with podcasts such as 'Daniel and Jorge Explain the Universe' and RI talks, such as 'On gravity' with Anthony Zee. The ideas in the latter were expanded upon when I attended a summer stretch week for Physics in the special relativity talks. This explained how time dilation was demonstrated through calculation in the Michelson Morley experiment. I also did the MOOC 'From the Big Bang to Dark Energy' which inspired me to write articles for the school Science Paper, one about 'The Shape of the Universe' and another on the motion of galaxies - how their orbits can be demonstrated mathematically and comparing the predicted and actual orbital speeds of stars to indicate the existence of dark matter. My research on this part of cosmology was enhanced by the astrophysics talks at the stretch week.

I was invited to the UKMT summer school in Year 10 where we covered Euclid's algorithm. The patterns you could see emerging are visually fascinating and it helped me connect the real world and the mathematical one. At school, similar links between shape and number, such as complex numbers and their loci on Argand diagrams, capture my imagination. In Year 9, I attended Maths masterclasses at the university of Kent introducing new branches of Maths such as topology. I studied this in more depth when I attended in Year 12 and also learnt about conic sections and graphs. The way that a planar shape could be described by a 3D object was something I wanted to explore further leading me to read 'Practical Conic Sections' by J.W. Downs. What particularly interested me about this book was how it demonstrated real world applications and other ways that were not purely geometrical for deriving the shapes.

At school, I seek out interdisciplinary links; for example, finding mathematical methods for showing physical changes, using calculus in the simple harmonic motion topic to find a velocity/acceleration - displacement graph by finding derivatives of or integrating trigonometric equations. I enjoy taking part in competitions, such as the UKMT challenge and the Cambridge Chemistry Challenge in which I was the second to have ever received a gold award at Weald of Kent Grammar School. I have also learnt how to manage responsibilities in a variety of roles which have honed my communication skills, as a Maths Ambassador, Subject Coach and private tutor, I have helped students in Maths and Physics. I have also been a Peer Mentor, supporting students both academically and personally. I am Deputy Head Girl, so I help with school initiatives such as our equality project.

I have also had numerous volunteering jobs, including an assistant badminton coach. I have taken part in team building initiatives such as NCS and silver DofE, and I paint, play badminton, play the flute and sail, which I want to continue into university.

I am eager to develop my understanding further so that I am fully equipped for a career in the scientific and mathematical world. I now work at Herstmonceux observatory, the place which first inspired me, where I give telescope tours and present Science shows. These experiences have enriched my academic life and enhanced my interest in the subjects of Maths and Physics as I work towards my goals of receiving a doctorate and working in the space industry.

Example 3

Economics appeals to me due its versatility and the framework for thinking it has given me, which applies to all aspects of my life, from current affairs, to minor everyday encounters. Paying an overcharged price at my local corner shop, for example, or extortionate coffee prices at the train station, as they enjoy a local monopoly.

Economics has widened my understanding of inequality in the world; I am passionate about living in a country where people have access to equal opportunities regardless of socio-economic class or birth country. This was ignited in class debates about the existence of billionaires and frequent visits to France driving past the vast migrant camps in Calais. To gain understanding and be ready for the debate, I read 'The Spirit Level'. It evidenced the argument that a more equal distribution of wealth is fair and economically beneficial; the more unequal societies perform worse in most quality of life indicators, hindering productivity. Pickett makes an interesting point about how economic inequality is defined by some politicians as naturally occurring and well-placed; but the detailed economic data in his book disagrees, highlighting that traditional ideas are not always equitable and efficient.

Through studying Economics and History, I have discovered a passion for the subject of Economic History. History deepens my economic understanding, allowing me to contextualise economic theory and understand it through real life application. Events in history often have causal, underlying links to Economics, so intertwining the two fields is extremely intriguing. The European interwar period and fascist economics deeply interest me, trying to understand how Europe dealt with the Great Depression of 1929 and how dictatorships emerged from unstable economic positions. Nurturing this interest, I read Tooze's 'The Wages of Destruction', which provided an alternative historiography of Nazi Germany - one which bridges the gap between History and Economic History and does not reject its importance. This challenged my prior understanding, as Tooze proposed that economic constraints, a lack of raw materials and the economic superiority of the West, were driving factors in the production of arms and the Blitzkrieg, arguably making the history of the war economical.

Recently, I watched a debate from LSE entitled 'Too much Maths, too little History. The problem of Economics'. I resonated with those in favour of the motion; History, Philosophy and Sociology have a valid role to play in Economics. Economics is not a 'hard Science' and does not abide by universal laws, so rather than regarding unique economic events such as the Great Depression or the NICE decade, as 'mistakes' or 'outliers', we should be studying Economic History to develop our existing models. Arguably a dependence on flawed models contributed to the devastation of the 2008 crash; many economists who had firmly denied the possibility of economic collapse relied on mathematical models that did not consider the crucial roles banks play in the economy, indicating how classical maths-based economic theory is potentially dangerous.

Studying Further Maths has exposed me to complex topics, teaching me to work logically and follow complex lines of reasoning. I also experienced undergraduate Maths last year during a lecture at LSE on manipulating integrals. Moreover, History has shown me how to scrutinise complex sources, advancing my analytical skills and aiding my ability to form arguments and evaluate in a well-balanced manner. This is reinforced in Economics; analysing contextual data sources, in order to present a detailed and evaluated answer.

I pursue my love for Economics through my job, as I tutor Maths and Economics, hoping to instil my passion for the subject into disheartened students. Studying Economics at undergraduate and postgraduate level will nurture my passion and leave me in a well-placed position in an ever-changing world, where the discipline is so vital.

Example 4

Trips to and from the hospital, since my first surgery at six gave me an insight into the roles of a large breadth of specialists in the health sector. This alongside my inquisitive mind and thirst for knowledge, particularly in Science, ultimately led to my decision to study medicine. The calculative, logical nature of Chemistry along with the analytical, diverse nature of Biology sparked my interest and meant that these lessons were always the ones to which I looked forward.

Work experience at Porton Down Laboratories in FW&E microbiology, RIPL and ECACC denoted the work of scientists behind the frontline aiding doctors to diagnose disease, as well as preventing outbreaks which may put a strain on the NHS. Moreover, I was entrusted with confidential information, developed my listening skills and ability to follow instruction, and took the initiative to teach myself the basics of real time PCR before seeing the process in practice. Working as a GCSE, SATS and 11+ tutor is honestly one of the best parts of my week. Not only has it broadened my communication skills by adjusting the tone and complexity of my explanations to match the age and needs of the student, it has also sharpened my ability to think on the spot, taught me patience, deepened my understanding of the topics I teach and enhanced my organisation, balancing work with my studies and hobbies. Being a Subject Coach and Prefect for Chemistry has made me dependable and approachable, while Peer Mentoring has also developed my skills in empathy by supporting a student through issues in her home life and exam stress. Completing an online course on edX about lessons from Ebola and preventing the next pandemic was interesting to compare to the current COVID-19 pandemic and allowed me to gain perspective on global health systems and the role of WHO. This interest led me to watch a series of lectures by the RSM on COVID-19. Due to my particular interest in the A Level immunity topic and Chemistry, I took a MOOC in Medicinal Chemistry. I learnt about medical imaging techniques, current and future cancer treatments and researched into new molecular targeted therapies and immunotherapy drugs. I became interested in Epigenetics and how Epigenetic drugs are used to treat cancer and wrote an article in the school Science Magazine on 'The Evolution of Cancer Chemotherapy'; I am eager to learn more about medical genetics, signalling, immunity and infection at university. In STEM Club we are building a motion-censored robotic arm which mirrors the movements of a real hand and could have applications in surgery. This has required teamwork and sharing of responsibilities. MedSoc has let me participate in ethical debates, share information on current events and better my public speaking and presentation skills on areas I have researched.

Organising activities as a Community Prefect has improved my leadership skills. Playing several instruments including clarinet, for which I am now preparing for an ARSM diploma after obtaining Grade Eight, relaxes me. Having competed for Ashford AC and Kent many times, I am Kent indoor long jump and triple jump champion and 2nd in the South of England indoor championships for pentathlon. This has taught me time management and to perform well under stress, while introducing me to people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, maturing my interpersonal skills.

My experiences within the healthcare sector in conjunction with my varied interests have all given me the qualities I feel are needed for a career as a doctor, along with a realistic image of the profession. I like the fact that in Medicine there is always something new to learn, the way Science progresses so quickly means that being a doctor is a life-long learning commitment- in which I am eager to partake. Most of all I would like to give others the same opportunities that I have now thanks to doctors: the care I was given to improve my hearing has allowed me to be the person I am today.