

# RACC

Richmond Adult Community College

## Guide to Personal Statements



**How to use this guide:**

The UCAS Personal statement is your opportunity to tell universities about your suitability for the course/s that you have decided to study. You need to demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment, and above all, ensure that you stand out from the crowd. Remember that the admissions selector reading your statement is an academic in your chosen area of interest and will therefore want to know the reasons why you connect with the subject.

This guide has been written with the help of admissions selectors at several top universities – these are the people who make the decisions. As well as useful tips and general advice, a sample personal statement has been written for some popular subject areas. These are not modal answers as they all have particular strengths and weaknesses. The aim is that you will become familiar with the typical content and look of a personal statement.

Many students have difficulties knowing where to start; many of the personal statements in this guide begin with reasons for choosing the course, then continue with extra-curricular activities, and end by returning to the chosen course. Although this is not a set structure for a personal statement, it may be a useful starting point with which to begin constructing yours.

Even the best personal statements in this book have some weak points; no one is expecting perfection. Remember that universities are mainly interested in your enthusiasm for the course you are applying for and your potential to do well on that course. Therefore, you should try to display this in your personal statement as strongly as you can.

**Getting Started:**

Writing about yourself is not something that you do often, so you may need to practise writing in this particular style. It is a good idea to list your hobbies and achievements, then you can decide which ones demonstrate your strongest skills and personality.

Although your statement should be tailored to the particular subject area you want to study, there are certain points that every statement should include:

- Why you have chosen the course/s that you have selected
- The reasons why that subject area interests you
- Aspects of your current studies related to the course/s that you have chosen
- Why you think you would be a good student
- Details of jobs, placements, work experience or voluntary work which you have undertaken, particularly if it has relevance to your chosen field
- Hobbies, interests and social activities that demonstrate you are a well rounded person
- Non-accredited qualifications, like the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme or Young Enterprise.
- Any other achievements that you are proud of
- Positions of responsibility that you hold both in and out of school
- Attributes that make you interesting, special or unique

- Whether you have any future plans of how you want to use the knowledge and experience that you gain

Remember that you only write one personal statement which should be relevant to all your university choices. Therefore, try to allow some consistency in your course choices. If you are applying for a joint course you will need to explain why you are interested in both aspects of the joint programme. There are some examples in this guide which show you how to achieve this.

### **Dos and Don'ts:**

**Do** brainstorm your ideas on paper before attempting to write anything.

**Do** aim to use about five paragraphs, making sure that each one flows in a logical way.

**Do** expect to produce several drafts before being totally happy.

**Do** ask people you trust for feedback.

**Do** ensure that you use your best English and don't let silly spelling mistakes and poor grammar spoil your statement.

**Do** be enthusiastic – you can have perfect grades, hundreds of extra curricular activities and be a really great person but if admissions selectors feel you aren't passionate about your course, you won't get a place.

**Don't** feel that you need to use fancy language. If you try too hard to impress with long words that you're not confident using, the focus of your writing may be lost.

**Don't** waffle on about things which aren't relevant – admissions selectors will fall asleep! If you feel you are starting to ramble, take a break and return to your statement when you are feeling more focused.

**Don't** try to be funny as admissions selectors may not share your sense of humour.

**Don't** lie – if you stretch the truth you may fall down at interview when you are asked to elaborate on an interesting achievement. It is also an offence to lie on your UCAS application.

**Don't** copy someone else's personal statement or 'borrow' chunks from existing personal statements. UCAS uses anti-plagiarism software which can detect when a personal statement is not someone's own work, and your application will be returned to you if this is the case.

**Don't** rely on spellchecker – proof read as many times as possible

**Don't** leave it to the last minute – you'll kick yourself!

**Don't** address sentences directly to the admissions tutor i.e. 'I hope you will consider my application' etc. Your personal statement is not a letter.

**Don't** expect to be able to write your personal statement whilst watching TV – this is your future, you only get one chance, and it's down to you!

### **Some common questions:**

*How strict is the word limit?*

UCAS Apply limits the text to 47 lines and students are not permitted to write more than this. The limit is there for a reason and a key test of the process is to check whether you are able to convey your reasons for wanting to study in a clear and succinct way. All the examples in this guide fall within this limit.

*Should I mention anything about my gap year?*

Yes! You should explain why you are taking a gap year and what you plan to do. Demonstrate your enthusiasm and initiative and highlight how the activity may relate to your course.

*How far back should I go when mentioning my hobbies and interests?*

Only mention things which help support your application; a long list of everything you've done is much less impressive than picking one or two things and writing about the skills you have learned through them. Activities undertaken recently will certainly carry more weight than those you did at school or as a teenager.

*I'm not interesting or unique...what should I do?*

Everyone has aspects to their personality that make them interesting, it's just a case of putting them into words. You may find it helpful to ask someone close to you like a friend, relative or tutor.

*How should I end my personal statement?*

Don't just let it fizzle out; this is your final chance to impress. Avoid being too general by writing something like "I am looking forward to becoming a psychologist"; be much more specific and end on a very positive note by closing your statement with something like "I am passionate about working with young children in the future and therefore am highly determined to make the most of my degree and achieve my ambition to become a developmental psychologist."

**Subject specific guides:**

A significant proportion of your statement will require you to demonstrate your interest and suitability for the course that you have selected. This section contains an example statement for key subject areas. Remember that these are not modal answers and all have particular strengths and weaknesses. Where you see a word or statement underlined, this indicates a mistake or weakness.

- Accounting and Finance
- Biology and related programmes
- Business Management
- Computer Science and related programmes
- Drama and Theatre
- Economics
- English language and linguistics
- Entrepreneurship and related programmes
- European Studies and Politics (example of a joint honours statement)
- Film Studies
- Health and Human Sciences
- History
- Humanities
- Law and Human Rights
- Literature
- Nursing
- Psychology
- What not to write!

**Accounting and Finance:**

I am applying for a degree in Accounting as I believe this degree will set me in good stead for my future career. In recent years I have become interested in the world of commerce and industry and I believe that studying this subject at university level will help me reach my goal of becoming an accountant. I have researched this career and believe that I have the necessary skills to succeed.

At my college, all students are encouraged to find a two week work experience placement. I arranged for mine to be at Phillips and Woodstock, a small accountancy firm in my local town. During this week I learned that there are several elements of the accountancy profession and that the career is very diverse. Phillips and Woodstock specialise in helping small businesses with their tax assessments, and as a result I have become particularly interested in the business consultancy side of accounting. The MD, Mr Phillips, was impressed with my work and commitment and has invited me to work at the firm part-time in my summer holidays. I am looking forward to the opportunity to gain more experience in my chosen career.

I am currently studying towards an Access to Higher Education Diploma in Business and Finance. The modules I have most enjoyed are 'Managing Information' and 'Managing a Business Project or and Event'. For the latter module my project was based on a tender by a construction company where I took the role of estimator and tried to write a competitive tender proposal. This was a challenging and interesting task, and one which taught me the importance of expertise in a chosen field. However, it was the unit 'Introduction to Accounting' which I most enjoyed and which, in retrospect, first sparked my interest in accounting.

I have a part-time job in a roadside restaurant near to my home. Although the job can be repetitive, it has been an important exercise in self-discipline as I start work at 7 am on Saturdays! I have also met many new people and become friends with some of the regulars. I try to save the money I earn from this job: university has been my long-term goal for the last year and my savings should help with the costs of studying.

I am really looking forward to going to university: partly for the social experience, but most importantly to further my studies in accounting. I believe that university will help me achieve my aim of qualifying as an accountant and perhaps one day running my own business, like Mr Phillips, or my all-time hero, Sir Alan Sugar. I would hope, however, never to be fired!

**Strengths:**

- The first sentence goes straight to the point. This implies decisiveness and commitment, and the personal statement is too short for a lengthy introduction.
- The student goes into a lot of detail about the work experience, which is good as it is relevant to his chosen subject and helped shape his career plans.

**Weaknesses:**

- It is a shame that the student did not go into more detail about the 'Introduction to Accounting' module, and explain how it sparked their interest in accounting, as this would be very relevant to his university application.
- The ending would have had more impact without the closing comment. Try to avoid flippant comments or cultural references, as admissions tutors may not understand them or share your interest in them.

**Biology and related programmes:**

From an early age I have been fascinated by biology. I can clearly recall spending time in the garden with my Grandfather looking at bugs and creepy crawlies. As I grew up my affinity with the natural world developed and studying biology at university is the next step on my journey.

I have had the most amazing gap year experience protecting the Lora turtles of Costa Rica from human poachers and beach erosion. As a volunteer on the programme I was able to help with research and conservation work such as night patrolling, working in the hatcheries, collecting eggs, rescuing and tagging turtles and helping the baby turtles get to the sea! This opportunity has enabled me to grow as a person in many ways. It certainly has been the best preparation possible for university life, as I have acquired all kinds of skills that will be essential for a new life away from friends and family.

A-Level biology has certainly provided me with an excellent grounding and I am confident that I have a real aptitude for this challenging discipline. I have enjoyed all of the modules taken so far, especially ecosystems as we had to consider the dynamics of such systems and look into human activities that impact on them. I particularly like doing practical work and look forward to being able to gain experience with more developed pieces of apparatus at university

I have held several positions of responsibility. During my final year at school I was appointed to the position of Senior Prefect. This was a great honour and I learnt many new skills, including public speaking. At College I continued this type of responsibility by being nominated Student Voice Rep. This position required me to attend various meetings with different types of people including the Board of Governors. I was the voice for all 2,000 students at our college.

I am an eager table tennis player and regularly compete at county level. I find it to be an excellent form of exercise for the body and mind! I am keen to try out different sports when I reach university because it will be the perfect way to make new friends and stay healthy. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is also something that I am involved in and have completed bronze, silver and gold awards. I am hoping to be involved in promoting the award scheme to young people in the future as I have really benefited from it and would like to be able to share my experience with others.

**Strengths:**

It can be good to talk about past experiences that have sparked interest in the subject. However be careful not to go off on a tangent and write more than is necessary.

The gap year experience is very relevant here and the student's enthusiasm is obvious: enthusiasm for a subject is very important.

**Weaknesses:**

This statement has a strong beginning and middle but concludes far too abruptly; you should always finish your statement with an enthusiastic and memorable ending.

This student ends by talking about his Duke of Edinburgh achievements, which though interesting, probably isn't the main reason why they are applying to university. It is preferable to conclude your personal statement by talking about your chosen subject and/or your eagerness to go to university.

## **Business Management:**

I have always been a very academically determined and studious individual, hence why I knew that a degree at university would be my definite next step. I have a broad interest in many subject areas but feel drawn towards a business orientated degree. Coming from a background of a small family business, I have been inspired by my parents and am keen to gain the essential skills to expand our growing empire! I am very aware that today's business requires not just balancing the books; it is about the investment and the management of assets, people, opportunities and risk. I am confident that studying a business degree at university level will prepare me well for my future ahead.

Access to Business studies has definitely provided me with a solid foundation which I am eager to develop. 'Management, Culture and Communication' is the module that interested me the most this year and I have undertaken extensive further reading in my own time. When in Rome or Rio of Riyadh...: Cultural Q7A's for successful business behaviour around the world by Gwyneth Oloffson, is an excellent read. I particularly enjoyed her views on manners and gift giving across the world.

Studying A-level psychology has also given me an insight into the human influences on organisational behaviour through looking at motivational theories, such as the hierarchy of needs model proposed by Masow. The coursework element has developed my skills in collecting and analysing data in order to establish trends and draw conclusions. My courses have also enabled me to develop an ability to express my ideas clearly and concisely.

I have a wide circle of friends and we often meet in our village pub to compete in the quiz. I also enjoy playing football with friends and hope to join a team when I arrive at university. Our family business is very important to me and I work most weekends at our shop, often shadowing my father at meetings with suppliers. I take work very seriously and feel that my conscientious approach will stand me in good stead for university study.

I recently attended a two day Challenge of Management conference at my local university. I also had the chance to go on a tour given by a current student and this made me realise that a campus style university is definitely suited to me. I am certainly going to take advantage of all the opportunities that universities provide to widen your knowledge like clubs and societies.

## **Strengths:**

- It is good to explain why a certain book appeals to you because this demonstrates your analytical skills and shows that you read around your subject
- Mentioning research into universities shows that you are dedicated and focused

## **Weaknesses:**

- The Challenge of Management conference that this student attended is very relevant and should have been expanded upon; always give details about specific experiences like this.
- If you mention that campus universities are your preferred choice, as this student does, make sure that all the universities you are applying to provide campuses!

## **Computer Science and related programmes:**

I am fascinated by the way developments in computer science have changed our lives and work. The world-wide computing industry is set to continue evolving and I am determined to be part of this. Since a very early age I enjoyed playing with computers and now that I am at college I spend a lot of times working with them. As well as Computing, I am taking A-levels in Physics and Mathematics. I believe that these disciplines compliment each other brilliantly and will prepare me well for undergraduate study.

A major recent achievement has been a GCSE Physics revision site which I designed for the students at my school. I carried out a significant amount of research prior to designing the site and this was definitely a worthwhile activity. This made me realise how important communication is when producing products. My main goal is to be part of a team that creates efficient and useful software for consumers.

My interest in computing has not only been restricted to school. With the help of my Dad, I have used all of my knowledge and skill to set up my own computer-related business. This challenge has given me a totally new perspective on how IT businesses operate. I had to write a business plan which was a totally alien experience for me, but once completed and implemented I was rewarded with the satisfaction of knowing that I had achieved something that most people would never have the chance to do, especially at my age.

Although computers are my passion I still enjoy other activities, particularly reading. Science fiction author Theodore Sturgeon wrote, 'a good science fiction story is a story about human beings, with a human problem, and a human solution, that would not have happened at all without its science content'; science fiction is certainly the genre I like most probably because of the link between science and real life.

When I'm not reading I can usually be found at the swimming pool. I have swum competitively since the age of nine. I hope to continue swimming at university and intend to start water polo, as this is something which I tried at a recent summer school and loved.

I look forward to extending my knowledge of computers and believe that university will enhance the opportunities that I have ahead of me.

### **Strengths:**

- This personal statement opens with an excellent concise summary of what prompted initial interest in the subject.
- This student demonstrates that his interest in his chosen subject goes beyond the classroom, which proves his interest in the subject and will strengthen his application.

### **Weaknesses:**

- Quotes are good but keep them short and only use them if they are relevant to your application
- The closing paragraph is very short and reads abruptly; remember to make use of this last chance to impress the admissions selector
- This student could have provided more information on the business he has set up

## **Drama and Theatre:**

From an early age I have always been fascinated by the stage. Far from being mere entertainment, I believe that a theatrical production can convey so much information and emotion to the audience. Although my main experience in theatre to date is through acting, I am also very interested in other aspects of productions such as lighting and set design, and I am keen to learn more about this in a university degree.

For my GCSE Drama final production, a group of us produced a play based on a short story by AL Kennedy. Because there were only six of us in the group, we shared a lot of responsibility. I played one of the main characters and was also in charge of obtaining the props we needed. These tasks were enjoyable but the most challenging part of the production was to adapt the story for the stage, and produce a script as close to the original story as possible. This was a demanding but enjoyable job and really opened my eyes to the complexity of adapting stories to the stage.

As well as Theatre Studies, my other AS-levels are in English Literature, Sociology and Biology. In English Literature we have just completed a module on plays in which we studied *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller and Shakespeare's *Henry V*. I go to the theatre as often as I can, and have seen many amateur and professional productions. My favourite playwright is Willy Russell. I think all his plays provide an interesting social commentary, and successfully blend comedy and tragedy. I have seen many musicals, but *Blood Brothers* is by far my favourite; I have now seen it four times! I am looking forward to discovering more playwrights while at university.

My interest in drama and the theatre takes up a lot of my social life. I have taken part in all my school's productions and am also involved in a local dram group 'The Bournemouth and Boscombe Light Operatic Club' –BBLOC for short. Every year we hold a major production, the most recent being *Oh What a Lovely War*. I value the experience of being part of this group as I get to work with people of all different ages. I also have a part-time job in a local Beefeater restaurant. This job has taught me the value of being able to work as part of a team, and I think helps me improve my performance within BBLOC and at school, as good team work is crucial to a successful performance.

I am looking forward to joining a drama society at university, and also possibly a film society, as the cinema and films are another of my passions. I feel I have a lot to contribute to university life and hope you will consider me for a place at your university.

### **Strengths:**

- Showing enthusiasm about joining clubs and societies at university will impress; universities like students who get involved.
- This statement shows awareness of different elements of drama beyond acting

### **Weaknesses:**

- This statement is very narrowly focussed on drama; it is good to show that you have interests outside your chosen subject area.
- The final sentence is addressed directly to the admissions selector; this is not advisable. The personal statement is not a letter

## **Economics:**

Since starting my AS-level studies in Economics, I have been eager to continue to a higher level. I am particularly interested in the behaviour of firms and organisations from an economic point of view and I have focused my coursework in this field. I regularly read newspapers and economic publications such as The Economist to keep up-to-date with developments in the field, and find it easy to use my mathematical and analytical skills to apply different economic theories to a range of real-life economic situations. I also take Maths and Politics AS-level and know that the skills I am acquiring from these will prepare me well for university-level study. I recently enjoyed the chance to put some of my business economic theory in to practice when I took part in an economics and business project called Young Enterprise. With a group of peers I set up a small company and sold stationary packs to students at our school. It was an excellent experience and I was able to enhance my management, communication and teamwork skills. I also achieved a distinction in the associated exam.

I would consider myself to be a very hard worker both in and out of school. Since the age of 16 I have worked part-time at Tesco's and have enjoyed positions of increasing responsibility. I now coordinate a small group of staff on the shop floor and have learnt a lot about the way businesses operate in the real world. I would be keen to continue working part-time within this company while at university, as I know I would be able to manage my time successfully and would enjoy being self sufficient. I have a real passion for all kinds of sport and regularly represent my school in various activities ranging from tennis to football. I have played tennis at county level for two years now and am looking forward to trying new sports at university. Music is also very important to me and I am a member of the sixth form rock band 'Chaos'. I am thrilled at the prospect of facing new challenges, including working and living independently. I also believe that I will gain a highly marketable set of skills from the study of economics at university, which will prepare me well for the exciting future ahead.

## **Strengths:**

- The strong involvement in sport and music demonstrates dedication
- This student has succeeded in conveying enthusiasm without going overboard.

## **Weaknesses:**

- Attention needs to be paid to style; the paragraphs are far too long and could be broken down into at least four separate ones.
- There are a few typing errors and missing letters in this personal statement.
- This student does not mention any current economic issues such as the recession or UK housing market, which somewhat undermines his claim that he keeps up-to-date with developments in this field.

## **English Language and Linguistics:**

My interest in linguistics has grown from my first year of sixth form when I took a course in English Language. During this course, I studied the work of Trudgill. I found this particularly interesting as I enjoyed looking at how and why the social class of a person affects how they speak. I also found the gender and language issues relating to how males and females approach language in a different manner very interesting. I have a general interest in sociology and look forward to combining this with my interests in linguistics.

Last summer I spent a month in Spain where I worked as a teaching assistant in a local school. Working in a foreign country allowed me to experience life where I did not completely understand the language used around me. It became clear that language is an essential tool used for everyday for communication. This opportunity allowed me to see language being used in different environments and I now want to understand how languages are used and how they work.

During my time at school I have been actively involved with the netball team, working my way to becoming captain last year. Being involved in the team has allowed me to develop my communication and time-management skills, along with motivating the rest of my team. I really enjoy volunteering and once a week I help younger students to learn Spanish. After my undergraduate degree I plan to study a PGCE as I would like to become a secondary school teacher of Spanish. I believe that volunteering will allow me to learn skills which will help me with this career path.

I have also been the Managing Director of a Young Enterprise company which won two awards for quality and best product at the local awards evening. Our company has also been selected to attend the regional awards later this month. From this interesting experience I learnt a lot about how the real world works and I worked incredibly hard to achieve my highest potential and compete successfully.

As well as these school organised activities, I also work in the local supermarket. I have to relate to the customers and assist them in a variety of ways. I feel this has boosted my confidence and improved my inter-personal skills both of which I think will help me in the transition from sixth form to university. I believe that studying linguistics at university will expand my knowledge of language, which I know will be essential in my future career. I look forward to setting myself new challenges and building upon my existing experience, which will hopefully help me to achieve my ambition of becoming a successful teacher.

## **Strengths:**

- This statement shows that the student has put thought into their long-term career goal. Although this is not essential and often not possible, it does demonstrate focused thought.
- This student draws attention to the skills she has developed through being involved in her activities (netball, young enterprise, part-time job) which is effective as the skills she mentions will be useful at university.

**Weaknesses:**

- This student has used the words 'interest/interesting' five times in the first paragraph. It is essential especially for a subject like English Language, to demonstrate a wide vocabulary.
- More could have been made of her Spanish skills; it is important not to under sell yourself.

**Entrepreneurship and related programmes:**

Since the September I have been studying for my Access to Business and Tourism course. As my studies have progressed, I have become increasingly interested in the marketing aspect of the degree as it seems to me that marketing is such a key element of successful business. It is crucial to all elements of business and elements of marketing are all around us, from logos to television commercials, and this is an area in which I would like to learn more.

My favourite part of my course, so far, has been a module called 'Conferences, Exhibitions and Events' in which me and two fellow students had to organise an event and were assessed on its success. Our event was a sixth form information day in which outside speakers came to our school to address the year 12 students. We had to contact the speakers, send them information, arrange refreshments, publicise the event to other students and write thank you letters at the end. On the day we were busy ensuring the event was a success and I got a real buzz from it, as well as learning what makes a good event. From this experience I think I would like to pursue a career in marketing and I believe a degree in marketing and entrepreneurship would set me in good stead for this.

I believe that I have the personal skills and the motivation to be successful in a career in marketing. I always help out at my school's open evenings and often receive praise from the teachers for my work. I am often referred to as a 'people person', always cheerful and well presented, and someone who can work well under pressure. I also have a lot of confidence and am not daunted at the prospect of leaving home to go to university, as I see it as a great opportunity.

I have a weekend job at my local Debenhams store, which I enjoy a great deal and through which I have learnt to work well with people and always put customers first. I have also recently helped the window dresser put together displays and plan promotions, and I found that my studies in marketing helped me give useful input to the store's promotions and displays. I felt real satisfaction in that my knowledge was making a difference. In my spare time I socialise with friends.

I feel I have the right knowledge and aptitude to succeed both in a marketing degree, and later in a career in marketing or events. I am looking forward to the opportunity university will give to study this subject in more depth and to prepare me for what will hopefully be a successful career.

**Strengths:**

- This student makes good use of her experiences at work to demonstrate her relevant skills.
- The overall feel of the statement is very enthusiastic.

**Weaknesses:**

- 'In my spare time I socialise with friends' is too vague and will not impress an admissions tutor. This does not add any value to your application.

- This student writes explicitly about her personality: it would be more effective to illustrate your personality through your interests, and give examples, rather than just stating 'I am a people person'.

### **European Studies and Politics (example of a joint degree application)**

The history, politics and culture of the European Union since its beginnings in the 1950's, has always interested me, and as a result European Studies is a natural choice of degree for me to study. I find Europe fascinating: that a group of diverse countries with their own cultures and heritage should come together and form common policies is an interesting and often controversial area, and one I would like to discover more about.

I have chosen to apply for a joint course in European Studies and Politics as I believe the two disciplines are closely interlinked. Politics plays such a major part in all our lives and the work of governments shapes both the life of the individual and a country's place on the world stage. Through my A-level History scheme I have studied British governments in the nineteenth and twentieth century and I also keep up-to-date with modern UK foreign politics by watching the news and reading broadsheet newspapers. I am particularly drawn to European Studies and Politics as the degree would offer me the opportunity to become familiar with the political systems of several countries; I am looking forward to studying more of the history and politics of Europe, particularly in the twentieth century.

As well as History, my other two A-levels are Business Studies and German. I also have an AS-level in Performing Arts. In Business Studies my main interest is the relationship between governments and industry; how for example, the laws passed by governments can shape the present and future industry of a country. This relationship will be the topic for my final project in Business Studies.

I have travelled to France, Spain and Germany several times, for family holidays and for exchange trips with my school. I am looking forward to the year abroad offered by the degree and would like to spend that in Germany or France.

Outside of school I play the trumpet and cornet, and am currently working toward my grade 6 exam for the trumpet. I have played in several school concerts and am a member of the Watchet Town Brass Band. I also enjoy going to the cinema and spending time with my friends.

I am looking forward to the opportunities that going to university will provide and to studying two subjects that have always fascinated me. I have a long-term goal of working abroad, possibly for the EU in Brussels, and I hope with a university education behind me, I can be successful in this mission.

#### **Strengths:**

- This student conveys her passion for both European Studies and Politics very well.
- She mentions the year abroad and talks about where she might like to spend it. It is good to show that you are thinking ahead.
- The student shows she understands the relationship between the two subjects.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Silly spelling mistakes look sloppy and there is no excuse!
- It is a shame she does not go into detail about A-Level German. This subject is very relevant to European Studies and some emphasis on her language skills would have strengthened her application. Particularly as she is thinking about spending her year abroad in Germany!

## **Film studies:**

Film Studies is my chosen subject at University because I have a lifelong passion for all aspects of film. Obviously I love watching and critiquing films, but I also have an interest in film production, including special effects. I enjoy seeing the new developments in CGI and other techniques such as prosthetics, sound and camera angles. As a child I loved Disney films but as I have matured I have grown to enjoy the works of David Lynch and to appreciate European cinema. The film which has had the most impact upon me in recent years is Florian Hankel von Donnersmark's 'The Lives of Others'. As I am also interested in modern European history I found this film compelling and raised many questions in my mind.

Much of my interest in film stems from my A-level work in Media Studies. I have written several long essays which have achieved good marks, and have taught me the importance of expressing and argument clearly, and paying attention to detail. Taking Media Studies has opened my eyes to film interpretation and the film making approach, such as the use of story boards and editing techniques. I enjoy making and producing films as much as interpreting them. My most recent piece of course work was a short promotional film designed to encourage children to play tennis. Although the production was at time challenging, as there were some complicated shots to film and the 'stars' of our film were all under nine years old, it was very rewarding to see the finished result and it received great praise. I really look forward to making and producing films at university.

My other A-level courses are History and Business Studies. I also took AS- level German which has helped in my appreciation of European cinema. I look forward to the opportunity to perhaps continue some aspects of these courses at University. I am also keen to get involved with the University Film Society, and also the football and tennis teams. Sport is a big part of my life, both as an active player and a spectator. I have been fortunate to be able to travel around Europe to attend tennis tournaments and have seen many of the 'greats' play: Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal to name a few. My all time idol is Pete Sampras; I admired his combination of huge talent and commitment which made him, in my opinion, one of the best tennis players of all time.

I am looking forward to the opportunities a university degree will give me, both academic and social and feel ready for this new chapter in my life. Through my studies and my personal experiences, I am convinced that Film Studies is the right choice for my university degree.

## **Strengths:**

- The student is very focused towards film studies and uses enthusiastic, positive language when writing about the subject.
- It is good to give an example of relevant work carried out on your current course.
- The student is clearly looking forward to university life.

## **Weaknesses:**

- The student could have given more information in the first paragraph regarding film production and special effects: he seems to 'gloss over' these interests
- He goes off on a tangent about his favourite tennis players: this part of the personal statement could have been shortened to make room for the point raised above.
- Check your grammar not just your spelling.

## Health and Human Sciences:

I am incredibly interested in the way that people behave and interact, and have always had a keen interest in healthcare. As soon as I started my Access to Higher Education Diploma in Health and Human Sciences I knew that a degree in this discipline would be my goal. During my studies I have particularly enjoyed the modules on psychology, sociology, equality and microbiology. A degree in Health Sciences interests me because it is highly inter-disciplinary and applied, and I feel that this will prepare me well for finding a job in the health and social care sector when I graduate. Although I am not certain yet, I am attracted to working within the area of health promotion. My family, friends and teachers often tell me that I am good with children so I can imagine myself working in schools.

I spent my work experience working in a surgery and loved every minute of it. I acquired many new transferable skills, particularly in the area on communication, both with patients and colleagues. I also gained a factual knowledge about how a surgery operates and how important patient confidentiality is. When I reach university I would like to get involved in the support services that are available for students. My sister is already at university and she volunteers for the Nightline service, which appeals to me too. I think it would be an excellent way to learn new skills whilst making new friends.

I try to get involved in as many extra-curricular activities as possible. I am a St Johns Cadet and enjoy this role very much. I attend various public events providing first aid treatment and medical assistance. I have learnt a wide variety of skills and techniques, from patching up a grazed knee to re-starting a heart after a major heart attack.

I enjoy reading, babysitting and keeping fit. I am particularly fond of books by Jodi Picoult and am a keen member of our village reading club. I go to the gym regularly and attend Pilates and water aerobics twice a week, I think it is really important to do physical exercise, not only for health reasons but also for mental well-being. I definitely feel very relaxed after participating in the classes.

I am a caring, responsible, dedicated and hard-working person. I am a good listener and I feel that my good communication skills will certainly prepare me well for a career in the health sector. I am also confident that my stamina, energy and commitment will ensure that I succeed at university. I really do hope to become a valuable member of a profession to which I truly aspire.

### Strengths:

- A keen interest in the subject comes across very clearly throughout
- The final paragraph shows real commitment and enthusiasm for the subject
- The student has also stated that her skills and personal qualities will be suited to a career in health which shows awareness of the career and what it requires

### Weaknesses:

- Each paragraph (and most sentences!) begin with 'I' this is not a good use of style or language and you must think carefully about how your statement looks aesthetically
- Some of the sentences are quite long; the personal statement would be easier to read if they were a little shorter.

## History:

I am applying to study History at university because this is a subject which has fascinated me from an early age. The study of history plays a large part in understanding who we are today, how nations are shaped, how conflicts begin and how they are resolved, and most importantly, how a country's heritage and values are created.

My GCSE and A-level have concentrated heavily on modern British history, an era which fascinates me, and which I would like to continue studying at university. In my spare time I have been reading into British immigration in the 1950's, a topic I find very interesting and a subject particularly relevant to present-day Britain. I have also been interested in military history, in particular the use of animals in warfare, especially homing pigeons and horses. This interest culminated in me going to see the play 'War Horse' by Michael Morpurgo, which left a great impression upon me.

This link between past and present is one which fascinates me. I have been to several museums and historical sites, and am a member of English Heritage. I find that visiting historical sites is a great complement to my studies. I am passionate about preserving historical buildings as they serve to remind us of our country's past. As well as studying British history at university, I also look forward to studying the history of other countries as a comparison to our own, such as Russian or American history.

To relax from my studies I play rugby in my school team: we were recently finalists in an inter-school tournament. I also work weekends in my local Asda store, where I have recently been promoted to 'greeter'. This is a front of house job where I help customers with queries and make announcements over the loud speaker system. I also watch out for suspicious activity and recently helped to catch a notorious shoplifter who was later arrested and charged. Being a greeter has improved my confidence greatly and taught me how to think on my feet and handle responsibility.

I am looking forward to going to university as it will provide me with an opportunity to be independent and to meet new people. But most importantly, I am looking forward to furthering my knowledge of history and continuing my interest in what has always been my favourite subject.

## Strengths:

- This student's comments about WW1 show they have an interest in history and current affairs and can formulate their own opinions from what they have read.
- The student also shows they have given some thought to other aspects of history (Russian and American) that they might like to explore at university, which again suggests they are forward thinking and enthusiastic about studying history at university.

## Weaknesses:

- There is an over use of the phrase 'I am looking forward to'
- This personal statement is a little short and some parts could have been elaborated upon: the student could have talked about the historical buildings they have visited for example.

## **Humanities:**

I am applying to study Humanities at university because I have always been interested in many different subjects and reluctant to pinpoint a favourite. When I first heard that there was a degree that covered a range of different disciplines I realised that this would be the perfect option for me. During my sixth form studies I was always aware that I wanted to attend university but, unlike my friends I found it difficult to find a university course which was not totally specialised and would allow me to continue with my wide range of interests. The huge range of disciplines available in the Humanities courses is a perfect fit for my wide ranging interests and a thirst for many different types of knowledge, and I am convinced it is the best course choice for me.

While studying for my International Baccalaureate, the courses I enjoyed the most were English, Philosophy, French and History. These are all subjects I am interested in continuing at university particularly English Literature. I was also fortunate to take standard level Latin which has provided a useful background for my interests in languages and philosophy.

Since I left school two years ago, I have worked in several places: in the retail sector and more recently in an art gallery owned by a family friend. Working full time has opened my eyes to the world of work and taught me skills which I believe will be invaluable at university: time management, responsibility, interacting with all walks of life and the importance of being friendly and cheerful to others. While working in the gallery I have also been given additional roles and responsibilities: such as organising exhibitions, managing the mailing list and publicising the gallery. I recently had to organise a private view for a local artist which involved printing invitations, organising the guest list and refreshments, and ensuring the evening ran smoothly. I really enjoyed this experience and I am now considering a career in gallery management or public relations.

I also enjoy reading (my favourite genres are the historical novel and autobiographies) and travelling; I am currently saving in order to spend a month travelling around Europe this summer. I am looking forward to meeting lots of different people and enjoying the cultural diversity that a university will have to offer. But more importantly, I am keen to return to academic life and will relish the challenges that a broad ranging degree such as Humanities will have to offer me.

## **Strengths:**

- This student writes confidently and fluently, and displays clear enthusiasm for the course.
- She has given details about what she has been doing since leaving school, which is essential for students who apply during their gap years.
- Her work experience is well presented and relevant.

## **Weaknesses:**

- She could have given more information about her IB studies: what exactly the courses involved, for example.
- This student needs to make sure her statement is relevant to all the courses she is applying for.

## **Law and Human Rights:**

My aspiration to study law is firmly rooted in my interest in world events and with my desire to help others. Law affects our everyday lives, almost without us noticing. The news always features an aspect of law up for debate. Ethical issues are often brought to the forefront on topics such as animal testing, abortion and gay rights. I find these debates absolutely fascinating and the complexity of law continues to astound me.

I have always maintained an independent, self-motivated approach to my academic studies. Having studied a broad range of AS and A-level subjects, I feel I have acquired a strong selection of skills: from Mathematics and Philosophy I have learnt the art of questioning the world around us and developing a keen sense of intellectual curiosity; from English Language and General Studies I have understood the importance of expressing myself clearly and concisely through words; whilst from ICT I have developed a solid understanding of an area which is playing an increasingly important role in today's society.

I have spent time in the public galleries of both the local County Court and High Court. I am fascinated by the processes that take place and my long term ambition is to play an integral role in the court room. In November I am due to shadow a district judge for a week, giving valuable insight into the day to day workings of the job. I built upon my initial interest by keenly reading *The Law Machine* by Marcel Berlins and Clare Dyer; it provided me with a firm grounding in the essential principles of the British legal system and highlighted its apparent weaknesses.

To gain a different perspective of the law I had the chance to take a work experience placement with a local solicitor's firm. My work evolved from basic administrative duties, such as filing, faxing and answering telephone calls, into accompanying solicitors to court and liaising with barristers on behalf of the firm. The opportunity to work alongside people who have dedicated their lives to the law has strengthened my decision to study this challenging discipline.

A keen passion of mine is debating and I have represented my school in various competitions. In year eleven I was a member of the winning team in the Rotary Youth Speaks final for East Anglia. Our presentation – is it ever justifiable to execute criminals? - was given a special award of distinction. I was appointed senior prefect at my school this year and it is a position which I take great pride in. It involves helping to maintain discipline amongst the younger pupils during lunch breaks and representing the school at various events.

In my spare time I like to swim and play netball. Although I do not play at a recognised level, I would be very keen to continue them as hobbies when I reach university. I understand the importance of having a good balance between work and play and I am confident that I would make the most of my time as a student. I believe that my ability to motivate myself is a key factor in my overall success. I am an extremely hardworking person and I am committed to reaching my goals. I believe I can contribute a genuine passion and enthusiasm for reading law and I thank you for taking the time to consider my application.

**Strengths:**

- Work experience is something which admissions tutors notice, especially for competitive degree subjects.
- Debating experience is also very relevant for this subject area

**Weaknesses:**

- A spelling mistake in the first line will not impress. You must proof read carefully
- You do not need to thank admissions tutors at the end of your personal statement. This looks like you are being creepy!

## **Literature:**

“Every secret of a writer’s soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind is written large in his works.”

This quote by Virginia Woolf summarises why I believe literature to be so fascinating and why I have chosen English Literature as the subject I wish to study at university level. Through my studies of A-level English Language and Literature, and my own discoveries of authors such as Virginia Woolf, George Elliot and Charles Dickens, I have found that authors do more than just tell a story; they also convey their own personal thoughts and opinions, and often provide a fascinating social commentary. For Example, Middlemarch gives a snapshot of nineteenth century provincial life, while Jane Austen’s novels often reveal her own – sometimes sarcastic – views on social situations in the early nineteenth century. These are the reasons why I believe literature to be such a rich source of information and why I would really like to study English Literature in more depth at undergraduate level.

I spent my schools work experience week as an assistant in my local ‘Borders’ bookshop. I enjoyed working with the staff on book promotions and helping to organise a book signing which was taking place the following week. I was also asked to write reviews on books I had read which were then displayed on the shelves. As I have a passion for books and reading, I really enjoyed encouraging others – particularly children-who visited the shop to read more, or to discover authors they had perhaps not previously heard of. Although I am no longer convinced that working in retail is right for me, after university I would like to pursue a career involving books and literature, such as perhaps publishing or teaching English.

As well as reading, I also enjoy getting involved in my local community in my spare time. As part of my school’s volunteering scheme, I work on Wednesday afternoons in a local charity shop. Through this work I have become friendly with some of the older ladies who work in the shop and now help them to write our village newsletter, which is distributed monthly. This is an interesting and satisfying task.

As I enjoy reading and discovering new writers and what they have to say about the world, I feel that English Literature is the right degree choice for me. I am looking forward to the opportunities I will have to discuss and write about texts, and the increased career prospects I am sure being a graduate will offer me.

## **Strengths:**

- Being able to compare and contrast texts in a concise way demonstrates passion and ability.
- It can be good to discuss books discovered outside the classroom because this shows real motivation to read.

## **Weaknesses:**

- There are several spelling and grammar mistakes. Admissions tutors will note these.
- Try to avoid comments that could be perceived as negative. For example, this student did not need to say that working in retail was not right for her.

## **Nursing:**

From an early age I took an interest in the health service having visited doctors and hospitals on many occasions. I admired the devotion and altruism of nurses who went further than just treating the patient, by genuinely wanting to make the patient as happy as possible in a difficult time. This really inspired me to want to do the same and help people, and the natural progression was to study Nursing at university.

I have recently enjoyed studying Biology and Sports Science at A-level, learning more about the fascinating human body. Biology has especially provided me with a good grounding on which to develop my knowledge and skills when studying Nursing at degree level. I have enjoyed all of my modules taken so far, in particular mental health which I can focus on in my chosen degree.

As much as I appreciate the theoretical work which is essential to gather a good grounding of the course, I am really looking forward to the clinical work in placement. I relish the opportunity to work in a natural environment where I can develop both my nesting and caring skills and work with a range of people. From previous voluntary work undertaken, I have experience working with people in distressing times. Through Millennium Volunteers I used to visit care homes and spend time with elderly people who often didn't have anybody else. It was very rewarding as I realised a few hours of my time meant so much to these people. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme which I have completed bronze, silver and gold awards in, has been a great experience – meeting new people, learning new skills and developing my abilities. Here I have undertaken other awards such as first aid training which again I hope provides me with some understanding which may help my studies. Part from voluntary work I have many interests – I am a keen sports fan and play netball regularly and swim. I also have violin lessons and have played in the school orchestra for many years, participating in many concerts in and out of school.

I feel that with a basic understanding and being a committed and determined individual I can successfully progress this challenging discipline and bring a lot to the course and the university.

## **Strengths:**

- A good background of interests and activities has been provided.
- The student has shown knowledge of and enthusiasm for the practical element of a Nursing degree
- The student has written an enthusiastic final sentence that will appeal to admissions tutors

## **Weaknesses:**

- Although the student talks about A-levels, voluntary work and other activities, she hasn't discussed the skills gained from them.
- The student has mentioned a particular interest in mental health nursing but more information could have been given about this.

**Psychology:**

From an early age I have been interested in people and the way that they believe. This keen interest has been enhanced through my study of psychology at A-level. I enjoy the variety of psychology and am eager to gain a deeper knowledge and acquire practical skills in new areas of the discipline. My favourite module so far has been Social Psychology, with particular emphasis on physical attractiveness and the formation of relationships. My final-year project, 'Do birds of a feather flock together?' tests the hypothesis that people select partners who are of a similar level of attractiveness. I really like the way that you can apply different psychological theories to real-life situations.

Although Psychology is my strongest subject, I have thoroughly enjoyed my other academic studies whilst at college and can appreciate how they will help me with my future studies. I have strengthened my assessment and evaluation skills through A-level Religious Studies, particularly the modules on philosophy and ethics. I believe that my study of ethics will be very advantageous when applied to the often problematic field of psychological research at university level.

I have achieved my Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award, am currently working towards my Silver and am hoping to achieve my Gold level at university. I love planning and undertaking expeditions as they are physically demanding and require total teamwork from start to finish. I also enjoy working for the 'service' element of the award. At the moment I visit the elderly residents at the local sheltered housing association once a week. This work can be quite draining at times but incredibly rewarding.

At weekends I work in a restaurant and have recently been promoted to head waitress. This position means that I am in charge of four other waiting staff during service and am responsible for co-ordinating the weekly rota. People often comment that I possess good communication skills and that I am a real team player. I know that these qualities will prepare me well for life at university.

I am very determined to make the most of my time at university. I am looking forward to making lots of new friends and being able to get involved in different sporting and social activities. Although I don't have any clear career plans, I know that a degree in psychology will provide me with an excellent set of transferable skills for the future.

**Strengths:**

- Discussing involvement in youth awards such as the D of E is an excellent way of illustrating teamwork skills.
- It can be effective to talk about a project you have undertaken as part of your studies, especially if it is work you are particularly interested in or proud of.

**Weaknesses:**

- This student doesn't actually write that they would like to study Psychology at university until the very end. It is important to state in your opening paragraph what subjects you are applying for and why.
- Many students don't have 'clear career paths' but it looks better if you don't declare this in your personal statement.

### **What not to write:**

For a number of years I have been keen to apply to university as I believe having a degree will help me find better employment in alter life. After much consideration, I have decided that Business Management is the right degree for me as I would like to learn the skills to help me become successful in business, and I am interested in finding out how businesses work. My father runs his own business and I have learned a lot from watching him work and hearing about the ups and downs of being a small businessman. I would now like to learn more about the theoretical side of business management.

I do not currently take AS business studies. This is not because of any lack of interest or motivation on my part, but because I suffered a major personality clash with the business studies teacher at my school. I am currently studying maths, it and history, I also took AS level further maths but decided not to continue this to A-level, when I decided that although I enjoy maths, I did not want to do a maths degree at university. I really enjoy all my A2 subjects I am taking as I believe they complement each other well, but they also differ. I really enjoy the class discussions, especially in History. I am quite a confident person so I like debating points and challenging the opinions of others in the class. It is a shame that there is not a debating club at my school as I would definitely have been an active member, but I look forward to perhaps getting involved with on at uni...

You get the idea with this! Try not to be negative, or talk about barriers most importantly you must be positive and talk about why you want to study the course.

### **Thank you**

We would like to thank the admissions tutors at Essex University for providing us with examples and commentary on personal statements they have read in the past.

At RACC your tutors will help you with your personal statements and Paula Summerhayes will proof read your final version. However, it is very important that you follow the advice you are given as the statement is your way of showing the university why and what you want to study.

You can contact Paula on by emailing her: [Paula.Summerhayes@racc.ac.uk](mailto:Paula.Summerhayes@racc.ac.uk)