

PERSONAL STATEMENT

Content;

This should include strong reasons why you want to do the course and why you are a suitable applicant. Hard evidence is needed to prove that you have sufficient interest, skills and motivation to work hard and finish the course.

Tutors will check these to ensure that you are not applying for the wrong reasons - e.g. you are buying time. The final decision could rest here, so invest time and effort to get it right.

The institution may indicate topics they want you to focus on. We suggest you include the following:

1. Why the subject interests you, and the areas of study within the subject you find particularly interesting

Show interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Specify fields of interest within the subject area and talk about them in detail - e.g. applicants for chemistry programmes may indicate they want to focus on inorganic, organic or physical chemistry.

Explain what drives your interests and provide strong evidence to back up your claims - e.g. include authors you admire, theories / problems which interest you, conferences you have attended, or relevant work experience.

It is especially important to demonstrate your commitment if you are applying to a conversion course, or if your undergraduate degree is not directly related to the graduate programme.

2. What makes you a good candidate for the course

Academic credentials

Will you cope with the academic rigors of the course? Tutors will want to know. They will consider:

- The level of your degree.
- Final classification / average grade.
- The standing of the institution where you are studying / have studied.

Many applicants will have similar academic credentials to you. So, if you have achieved anything which makes you stand out, mention it in your application - e.g. a particularly high mark, award for academic achievement, or prize for project work.

Relevant experience

Very important!

Look closely at the course programme and pick out key skills and knowledge required. Then use specific examples from your academic studies, work experience, or extra-curricular / practical experiences to show what makes you a good candidate.

Explain your skills in detail - do not assume the admissions tutor will understand your capabilities just by reading the title of your final year project. If relevant, explain:

- Specific hard and soft skills gained.
- Research methods used.
- Techniques you are familiar with.
- Equipment / resources / software packages used.

3. Why you are applying to that particular programme of study

Explain why you find the course particularly attractive.

- Do the academics have a good range of expertise in your chosen field?
- Does the institution / local area have an especially good range of resources to assist you with your studies?
- Does the programme enable you to study modules that you are interested in?
- Is there lots of freedom to choose modules?
- Is the mode of study attractive - e.g. if it is a distance / e-learning course, you may want to say why this is particularly attractive, and indicate how you will cope with this method of learning.

Such details show that you have researched thoroughly and really want to study there.

Check details carefully. Stating that you want to work on a project that is outside of the department's area of expertise, or be supervised by an academic who no longer works at the institution, will not impress!

4. Details of your future plans

How does the course fit in with your future plans? Mentioning this could help establish your motivation and commitment. If, for example, if you want a career in recruitment, talk briefly about this on your application to study HR Management. The same applies if you plan to go on and do an MPhil / PhD in your chosen subject.

Ensure your comments are brief and focused.

If applying for a Research degree, you may also need to write a research proposal.

Structure;

If guidelines are provided, follow them carefully. It will show that you are taking the application seriously and have read through everything properly.

Establish the topics you want to cover first. Once content is decided, you can think about how you are going to structure the information.

Do not exceed a specified word limit (extra words may be ignored, or your application may even be discarded). If no limit is imposed, aim for one / one-and-a-half pages of text.

Top tips

- Think about how many words you want to use for each topic. Don't spend 80% of your answer covering one point and then cram everything else into the remaining 20%. Plan a basic outline. You can always make changes at the editing stage.
- Start positively - grab the reader's attention.
- Put the most important information first: your interest in the subject and why you are a suitable candidate. Don't save your best selling points until last - you should immediately create a good impression.
- Each topic must lead logically onto the next. Don't randomly jump from one section to the next, or mention something and re-visit it several paragraphs later. Your statement is evidence of your abilities - you must be coherent.