

*Cathy Gilbert, Director of Customer Strategy at UCAS, shares her top ten tips for writing a winning personal statement:*

- 1.** Remember how important the personal statement is to your application. This is a chance to show the universities why they should offer you a place, and it may be the only written work they see before making a decision.
- 2.** Be sure to get your grammar and punctuation right. These mistakes will be obvious to higher education staff. It's quite acceptable to ask people you trust to read the statement through.
- 3.** Before you start writing, check the Entry Profiles for the courses you're interested in on Course Search at [ucas.com](https://ucas.com). Universities set out the qualifications and experience they are looking for here.
- 4.** You can enter up to 4,000 characters (including spaces) and 47 lines of text (including blank lines) – but there is no need to use all the space. I would recommend writing the statement offline then pasting the finished text into [Apply](#).
- 5.** Think about why you are applying for the courses you have chosen – universities want to see strong evidence that you know what's required and that you're enthusiastic about the subject. Read our [Ucas Advisers' blog](#) to see what the decision-makers are looking for.
- 6.** Ucas's [personal statement worksheet](#), designed to help you think about what to include, has been downloaded 96,000 times this year.
- 7.** Remember there's just one personal statement, whether you make one or five choices. If you are applying for different subjects or courses, try to pick out common themes and skills, such as writing ability or problem solving skills.
- 8.** Write about jobs, work experience or work placements that are relevant to the courses you are applying for. If you are a mature student, it's likely that you'll have significant experience in the workplace to put forward.
- 9.** Remember that the statement should be all your own work, and not plagiarised. The Copycatch system checks each statement against a vast library to find similarities. It simply isn't worth trying to copy your statement, and very few applicants did this last year.
- 10.** Use solid examples that show your abilities and experiences, rather than vague statements such as "I have always dreamt of becoming..." If you're stuck on the introduction, [UCAStv](#) has a video looking at the best way to start your statement.

## **Top 10 most overused personal statement opening sentences**

1. I am currently studying a BTEC National Diploma in ... (used 464 times)
2. From a young age I have always been interested in ... (309 times)
3. From an early age I have always been interested in ... (292 times)
4. Nursing is a very challenging and demanding career ... (275 times)
5. For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated with ... (196 times)
6. "Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only" ... (189 times)
7. Nursing is a profession I have always looked upon with ... (178 times)
8. For as long as I can remember I have been interested in ... (166 times)
9. I am an International Academy student and have been studying since ... (141 times)
10. Academically, I have always been a very determined and ... (138 times)

## **Reasons for Unsuccessful Applications**

- Your personal statement does not strongly support your desire to study your chosen degree.
- Your personal statement did not show sufficient understanding, relevance or knowledge about the course you are applying for.
- You failed to demonstrate sufficient knowledge and interest in the subject in your personal statement.
- There is a lot of competition for places on this course and your personal statement and experience was not as strong as other applicants this year.
- Application form (including personal statement, reference and predicted grades) does not evidence accurate understanding of or motivation for subject.
- Not expressed a strong enough interest in the subject.