

Personal statement: Changes for 2026 cycle

Guidance for parents, guardians
and carers

UCAS



Using this deck

This presentation deck has been designed to support **parents and carers** through the changes to the personal statement for the 2026 cycle.

You can copy and paste slides into your materials and guides to tailor the deck to your requirements.

We'll continue to communicate key operational changes to parents through our monthly newsletters. Please encourage all parents to **[sign up](#)** to receive them.

What's changing for 2026 entry



Format & structure

Move from one long piece of text to a scaffolded approach.

Three sections with question prompts.



Character Count

4000 total character count remains; includes spaces.

Minimum character count of 350 per section.



Support & advice

Clear links to guidance in the application for students.

Ongoing support ahead of the 2026 entry cycle going live.

Why is it changing?

Previous UCAS research found 79% of students felt that the process of writing the statement was difficult to complete without support.

The new format will ensure students from all backgrounds better understand the key information universities and colleges want to know about them, when making admissions decisions.

The three sections, each carefully scaffolded with specific, mandatory questions will improve the application experience for all.

“These changes will make it easier for students to complete their personal statement and understand what to include.”

Helen Reed
University of Cambridge

Timeline

Courses starting in 2026 are available to search in the UCAS Hub.

UCAS Undergraduate applications open for 2026 entry registration.

Deadline for applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and for courses in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine/science.

Deadline for most undergraduate applications.

April 2025

May 2025

Oct 2025

Jan 2026

- The personal statement will change for those students applying to courses starting in 2026.
- Students will start preparing their applications in 2025 so may begin to think about their personal statements this year.

The purpose remains clear

The personal statement remains a student's opportunity to:

- **show** passion, curiosity and knowledge.
- **evidence** relevant skills and potential.
- **communicate** genuine interest and a desire to learn more.

The structure is there to encourage students, providing prompts to:

- **link** their academic, extra-curricular and other experiences to their **chosen area(s) of study**.
- there's no right or wrong.

Examples could fit into more than one section, remember:

- the important thing is to **explain** why they're including it and what they've **learned** from it.
- the statement will still be reviewed as one piece.

What are the questions?



Why do you want to study this course or subject?



How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?



What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

Research is the foundation of a strong personal statement.

It's important to note any examples given by UCAS are merely guidance, and not everything suggested needs to be included in every personal statement.

Requirements may differ for each university or college, as well as depending heavily on the course. It is important students research their chosen area of study before writing their personal statement.

Q1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Students will want to show **evidence** of passion, curiosity and interest, this could include:

Motivations for studying this course(s):

- Have they been inspired by a key role model or moment in their life?
- Is it a subject they love and want to pursue further?
- What is their drive?
- How has their path led them to this course or subject area?

Knowledge of this subject area and interests:

- Is there a particular subject area they've researched?
- Something they can't wait to learn more about?
- What about a book or subject expert doing great things that's sparked their interest?

Future plans; demonstrate why this course/subject is a good fit:

- Do they already have a particular profession in mind?
- How might they use their studies to launch their career?
- What's important to them and their future, and how might the knowledge gained from their chosen course(s) help them to achieve this?

Q2: How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

Focus on what's most **recent** and **relevant** to the subject or course(s), examples could include:

How their studies or training relate to chosen course(s) or subject area:

- This could be current or previous studies.
- From any form of formal education – think school, college, training provider, or short online university course.

What relevant or transferable skills they have that make them a great candidate:

- Are there a couple of subjects that helped develop a core set of relevant skills required for their chosen course(s).
- Maybe a particular module or project helped them understand where their interests and strengths lie.

Any relevant educational achievements

- Universities and colleges will see grades on their application - don't waste space talking about these.
- Focus on accomplishments like a competition, holding a position of responsibility or representing the school/college.

Q3: What else have you done to prepare outside of education, UCAS and why are these experiences useful?

Examples should be **reflective** and **demonstrate** further **suitability** for the subject or course(s), this could include:

Work experience, employment, or volunteering

- In-person or virtual work experience.
- Paid for work or volunteering.
- The key thing is reflection on the experiences and the skills gained relevant to their chosen course(s).

Personal life experiences or responsibilities:

- Is there a situation they've personally overcome that has influenced their decision?
- Are there personal experiences that have helped them develop essential qualities for the course?

Hobbies and any extracurricular or outreach activities:

- Think sports, reading, community work, summer schools.
- Any activities outside of core studies that help further showcase why they'd make a great student.

Achievements outside of school or college

- This could be a position of responsibility for local clubs or groups, competitions, or qualifications they've attained outside of the classroom.

Examples of evidence

In person work experience	Blogs & vlogs	Positions of responsibility	Projects or essays	Mentoring
Virtual work experience	Documentaries	Awards	Books	Tutoring
Work shadowing	Podcasts	Challenges	Influencers	Online subject courses
Paid employment	TED Talks	Personal life experiences	Hobbies	Trips or visits
Volunteering	Articles	Work based learning / training	Clubs	Competitions

Remember to PEEL

Point

Evidence

Explain

Link



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