

## **A Guide to Personal Statements**

### **How to structure your personal statement**

For Cambridge applications, the most important part of your personal statement is the subject-focused content. Admissions tutors and interviewers are interested solely in your academic ability, commitment and potential. It is suggested that around 70% of the space available should be used to convey your interest in the subject you are applying for and how you have pursued this within your school/college studies and beyond, particularly in wider academic reading and study beyond the school syllabus. Wider reading should include some articles and books, and not solely internet material.

If you are planning to take a year out between high school and university (you should remember that for some courses this may be discouraged, so check the prospectus or course entry online), it is a good idea to briefly outline your plans for the year.

If you know what career you hope your degree will lead you to or have plans for your future beyond your degree, include them, but you will not be penalised if you don't.

### **What to include**

The personal statement is an opportunity to demonstrate to admissions tutors, in your own words, why you would be an asset to their university and to the particular program for which you are applying. You should use the opening (~70%) section to provide detailed examples of what you enjoy academically and are interested in. It is better to develop a couple of these examples at length, rather than creating a list.

### **What not to include**

Don't waste space mentioning anything which is already stated elsewhere on your UCAS application. It is better not to include anything vague, such as what you 'might' do before you start your course or once you have finished it. Don't use words you would not normally be comfortable using.

### **What about extra-curricular activities?**

Admissions tutors at Cambridge will not take your extra-curricular activities into account (unless they relate directly to the course for which you are applying) when they are making a judgement on your application. If you do take part in activities outside of school hours, explain what they show or what you have gained from them (e.g. self-motivation or good time management) and how these skills may make you a good student. If you don't, you are in no way disadvantaged. You should remember that some other universities are interested in your wider contribution to the university and that your personal statement needs to appeal to all of your choices.

### **And finally**

A personal statement is exactly that: personal. There is no winning formula or template. Following the guidelines above should, however, help you to include the sort of thing a Cambridge admissions tutor would hope to read about when assessing prospective students.