

UCAS PERSONAL STATEMENT: THE ESSENTIALS

Your personal statement is an important part of your application to Oxford. It allows you to tell us about your interests, achievements and ambitions in your own words. Although we do not formally score your statement we read it carefully and use the information it contains as part of our short-listing exercise. If you are invited for interview, the statement is likely to provide a focus for the questions that you are asked. It is therefore essential that your statement is an accurate, unembellished account of your activities. We may check the claims that you make on your statement: discovery of fabricated or exaggerated material – at selection, or later during your time as a student – may bring into question your suitability to practise Medicine.

For A100 Medicine at Oxford, GCSE and BMAT performance data are predominantly used in the first instance to determine whether or not you are short-listed for interview. The information that you provide in your personal statement becomes increasingly important if you are not short-listed on the basis of GCSE and BMAT scores. Of course, every detail becomes important once you have reached the interviews and are being considered for a place.

1. First and foremost, please **do not be shy in declaring any 'mitigating circumstances' that may help us to put your achievements or personality within a finer context.** We actively look, for instance, for reasons why you may have under-performed in examinations, or performed well against the odds. These may be factors associated with your schooling, health or domestic circumstances. If you are returning to study after a break, or switching vocation, it is even more important to highlight your reasons for choosing a course at Oxford, and for you to demonstrate your determination, resilience, ability and commitment.
2. **Do not simply recount everything you have ever undertaken.** We're looking for quality not quantity! Remember that large numbers of candidates apply for our courses. Tell us in what ways you will stand out from the crowd. In choosing to talk about an activity, describe what you have drawn from the experience: has it changed you as a person? Did it surprise you?
3. **We want to learn about YOU as a person, not just your academic qualifications.** If you have undertaken extra-curricular activities, or hold positions of responsibility at school, tell us why you sought these, and why they are important to you. You will not impress simply by telling us that you took up a placement in Thailand, but we might get something more out of it if you tell us what you personally learnt from the lifestyle to which you had to adjust, about your interaction with local people, and about shadowing the medical team working within your village.

Example

I have become involved with a city music and drama group, and work especially with the younger members. I find this exciting and more than occasionally challenging. Coaching for the group has given me experience in organizing others, as well as teaching them. Watching group members learn and progress is thrilling, especially in the case of one of them who has ADHD. At first he was incapable of remaining still, silent or attentive for even a few minutes, but eventually became far more focused and calmer, making excellent progress in many areas.

4. When deciding on what to focus, **DIRECTLY address our selection criteria in your statement** (for Medicine, as below):

Personal characteristics: suitability for medicine

- Empathy: ability and willingness to imagine the feelings of others and understand the reasons for the views of others.

Example

My volunteering in the local community and my studies in Religion and Classical Civilization have also increased my ability to understand varying cultural, ethical and social perspectives, and allowed me to look at issues in a wider context.

- Motivation: a reasonably well-informed and strong desire to practise medicine.

Example

My interest in the human body burgeoned while I was taking the Essentials of First Aid class organised by St. John Ambulance. The two consecutive years of volunteer service in X Hospital that followed reinforced my passion for the subject.

- Communication: ability to make knowledge and ideas clear using language appropriate to the audience.
- Honesty and integrity.
- Ethical awareness.
- Ability to work with others.

Example 1

I have had a weekend job at X since 2006, which has further allowed me to develop teamwork skills, taught me how to work towards personal targets in pressure situations, and allowed me to interact with many different members of the public.

Example 2

Dancing has taught me valuable people skills; you learn to work intimately with fellow dancers and trust them completely.

- Capacity for sustained and intense work

Academic Potential

- Problem-solving: critical thinking, analytical approach.
- Intellectual curiosity: keenness to understand the reason for observations; depth; tendency to look for meaning; enthusiasm and curiosity in science.
- Communication skills: willingness and ability to express clearly and effectively; ability to listen; compatibility with tutorial format.

Example 1

Studying History at A-level has helped develop my writing skills and critical analysis

Example 2

At school I have taken part in a French exchange programme which greatly improved my language skills, independence and confidence

5. **You will not be alone in trying to open your statement with an attention grabbing intro.** If you try this, make sure it helps tutors to learn something about what motivates and enthuses you.

Example

My vast collection of books and videos on "How the Body Works" when I was 7 years old first triggered my interest in the functions of the body. Watching the little personified, cartoon blobs that represented red blood cells run around an animated yet functioning body fascinated me and I longed to find out more. As a result, when a friend received a letter explaining their little girl, had just been diagnosed with X at just 14 months old, I was intrigued to find out what this was.

6. **The statement is called a 'Personal statement' for a reason. It should be written by you, not by your parents, siblings, teachers. Do not plagiarise material that you find on the web; such deception will be discovered.**

7. **Do not feel that there is a precise' template' to follow that will score you points!** We look for bright, independent and original thinkers.