## PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKBOOK

**UNDERGRADUATE** 



## MAKING A DECISION...





Ask yourself what you are interested in and what subjects you enjoy. Don't commit yourself to studying a subject you don't even like.

Do your research. Look at universities' websites and UCAS.com, talk to people from different professions, read independent guides, speak to your careers teacher, try student shadowing at LJMU, or use online guidance tools such as the Stamford test...



CONSIDER THE DURATION OF THE COURSE

– IS IT THREE, FOUR OR FIVE YEARS?



CONSIDER WHAT YOU WANT TO DO IN THE FUTURE AND WHETHER YOUR CHOSEN COURSE WILL HELP YOU GET THERE.



## ...how to **choose** your **course**

Which qualification will your studies lead to? e.g. BA, BSc, BEng.



Consider how the course is taught and assessed — do you prefer exams or coursework? Would you rather do more classroom work or self-study?



WOULD YOU LIKE THE OPTION TO STUDY ABROAD OR SPEND A YEAR IN INDUSTRY (A SANDWICH COURSE) OR DO YOU PREFER PURE STUDY AND A QUICKER GRADUATION?

Do you want to study full time or part time?



To fully understand the course content, make sure you look further than the course title – look at modules, assessment, placements and how you will be taught.



### Some things you may want to keep in mind when choosing a university:

- Does the university offer the course vou want?
- Would you prefer to stay close to home, or move away?
- Will you feel more comfortable studying on a campus or in a city university?
- Do you prefer a large or small institution?
- Are you realistically likely to meet the entry requirements at this particular university?
- Do you like the city?
- Where will you live?
- Do you like the university buildings, accommodation and facilities?
- What financial packages are on offer?

Remember to get a feel for a place first, visit the university before applying, explore the city and try out the facilities, chat to staff and students at an Open Day.











Visit Liverpool John Moores University at one of our **OPEN DAYS**.

Register online now to receive more information ljmu.ac.uk/op

### Key dates for your diary

Check the UCAS website for full details: www.ucas.com/apply/key-dates

March - June	UCAS Fairs will be taking place all over the country. A perfect opportunity to chat to the universities you are interested in, pick up a prospectus and register for an Open Day.	
June - October	Most universities hold their Open Days during this time. Visit the ones you are interested in. Use these events to rule out universities that may not be right for you.	
June	Start work on your online application form on UCAS Apply www.ucas.com/apply	
September	This is the earliest date you can send a completed application to UCAS.	
15 January	Application deadline for the majority of courses. Remember that your school or college is likely to have an earlier deadline for personal statements	
February	UCAS Extra begins (if you missed the January 15 deadline).	
24 March	A later deadline for some Art and Design courses.	
August	Results day/Clearing/Adjustment vacancy search.	

## How does UCAS Apply work?

- You have a maximum of five choices you don't have to use them all. You may choose to apply for a number of courses at one university, or at different universities.
- You only have one personal statement. All admissions teams will receive the same statement so make sure it is suitable for all your applications.
- Your personal statement can have a maximum word count of 4000 characters (including spaces). Use them wisely – only include relevant information and avoid repeating yourself.



ORDER A PROSPECTUS:

ljmu.ac.uk/study/undergraduate-students/order-a-prospectus

# WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

#### Why is the personal statement important?

- It's your chance to tell us about YOU, and why we should make YOU an offer.
- It's your opportunity to explain your choice of course, your motivation and commitment.
- It forms the basis for making you an offer or being selected for interview. It also drives the questions asked at the interview.
- It is especially important if your grades are borderline.

#### **HOW TO START**

1.

Ask yourself what key messages you want your personal statement to give

2.

Prepare a list of facts about yourself that you want to include (with evidence)

3.

Organise the material into a logical structure: introduction, main body, conclusion



#### **STRUCTURE**

Approach your personal statement like you would an essay. It should have a clear, organised structure with introduction, main body and conclusion.

#### I Introduction

This should grab the reader's attention and encourage them to read on. Mention why you have chosen your area of study.

#### Main body

This is where you provide the bulk of information about you, your skills and your choice of course. It will cover your previous experience at school and outside school, any hobbies, your reasons for applying – but only facts relevant to the course you are applying for.

#### Conclusion

Leave the reader with a positive reinforcement of your key messages.

#### WHAT TO INCLUDE

#### About your choice

- Why are you applying for this course?
- Which aspects of it are you looking forward to studying?
- Why are you interested in this subject?
- What are your reasons for going into higher education?
- Demonstrate that you have put research into choosing the best course for you.

#### **ABOUT YOU**

**EDUCATION** - cover not just the subjects you study, but also why you study them, how they link to your course choice and which aspects you enjoy. Tell us of any experiences such as drama productions, school concerts, sports activities, positions of responsibility you may have held (student council, head boy/girl etc), charity initiatives, event organising.

**WORK EXPERIENCE** - this can demonstrate experience related to your course or, even if unrelated, show skills such as communication, team working, time management, problem solving and many more.

FUTURE CAREER PLANS - if you already have some - this shows that you are focused and committed.

**SUBJECT-RELATED HOBBIES** - if your hobbies have nothing to do with the course you are applying for, think carefully about including them as there may be a better way to utilise your 47 lines.

#### REMEMBER

Allow plenty of time to prepare several drafts, revisit them and get feedback. If you rush your personal statement, the admissions tutor will know it

Use good written English and a clear structure – remember to spell check

Make your personal statement interesting – avoid obvious statements that could apply to anyone

Make it unique – your personal statement should show the real you, don't pretend to be someone you are not

#### Sell your strengths - it's your chance to shine

Substantiate your personal statement with examples – don't make bold claims unless you can prove them

#### It's important to come across as motivated and enthusiastic

Write your personal statement yourself – if you use any templates available on the web, or work together with a friend, chances are you will get caught and accused of plagiarism

Keep a copy of your personal statement – if you have an interview, questions may be based on your personal statement

## EXAMPLES OF SKILLS THAT ADMISSIONS TUTORS LOOK FOR:

- Good communication skills (listening, oral and written)
- Motivated
- Hardworking
- Time management skills
- Keen to learn
- Independent study skills
- I Team working skills
- Focused on the subject
- Relevant work experience
- I Punctuality and good attendance record
- IT literacy
- I Honest and trustworthy

When talking about your previous experience...



Say what you did (good)



Say what you have learned from it (better)



Say how it links to the course you are applying for (best)

DON'T JUST LIST EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER DONE



# COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Avoid bland statements such as "I like reading". What do you like reading? Why do you like reading? What do you gain from reading?
- Don't repeat the information already provided in other sections of your application
- Don't make things up very embarrassing if you get caught
- Don't waffle
- Don't write your life story only include information relevant to the course
- Avoid using language you don't understand
- Don't make silly errors such as typos or copy and paste mistakes. Run a spell checker and ask someone to proofread your statement

#### **ABOUT YOU**

#### **Does your personal statement demonstrate that:**

- You understand what the course entails?
- I You have a true interest in this subject?
- I You have the intellectual ability to cope with the demands of the course?
- You are the type of person that the admissions team are looking for?
- You will get involved in university life and make a positive contribution in classes?
- I You have thought through your reasons for applying?
- You are motivated and likely to accept a place, if offered?
- I You can write clearly in good English with a structure?
- I You can provide evidence of any statements you make about yourself?



# WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU'VE SUBMITTED YOUR APPLICATION?

## You can track your application on UCAS. You will receive one of the following outcomes from each of your choices:

- I (INV) Invite for interview/audition
- An offer decision:
  - **(C) Conditional** most students will receive conditional offers that will depend on grades pending (e.g. BBB, 120 points in UCAS Tariff this may include a minimum grade in a specified subject)
  - (U) Unconditional this is quite rare and for applicants who already achieved grades
- (R) Reject no offer of a place
- (W) Withdrawal non-attendance at interview or withdrawn application
- (F) Full your chosen course if full. This can only happen if you miss the application deadline

You may also receive an invite to a departmental Applicant Day – it's your chance to interview the university. Don't miss it!

More information about LJMU's Applicant Days:

ljmu.ac.uk/study/undergraduate-students/informationfor-applicants

#### YOU CAN ONLY TAKE TWO OF YOUR OFFERS FORWARD:

- I One must be your 'Firm (F)' choice, which is your first choice course
- I You can also have an 'Insurance (I)' choice, which is your second choice
- I These will be displayed as CF/UF/CI/
  UI depending on whether your offer is
  Conditional or Unconditional
- I Ideally your insurance choice should have lower entry requirements that your firm

If you have not received any offers, do not panic. You may still secure a place through UCAS Extra or Clearing.

Visit our website to find out the answers to frequently asked questions about Clearing:

ljmu.ac.uk/study/undergraduatestudents/clearing/your-essential-guideto-clearing-confirmation-and-adjustment

## **EXAMPLE AND ANALYSIS OF A PERSONAL STATEMENT**



GUILTY!!! I confess!!! I want to study Law!!! From an early age I was attracted to law as it is such an important aspect of From an earry age I was attracted to law as It is such an important aspect of Society and more recently the evolution of the laws has interested me. I have taken part in exchanges, travelled internationally and this together with a taken part in exchanges, travelled internationally and this together with a Belgian mother has given me a cosmopolitan outlook and fuelled my interest Belgian momer has given me a cosmopolitan outlook and fuelled my interes in European laws. Following my GCSEs in which I gained the Latin prize I chose a mixed combination of A levels. By studying Mathematics and

Chemistry I have acquired the scientists respect for logic, reason and critical Chemistry I have acquired the scientists respect for logic, reason and critical analysis and from the study of German I have developed a greater sense of linguistic awareness and enhanced my oral expression and writing skills.

Spending two weeks at one of the region's largest firms of solicitors gave me an Spending two weeks at one of the region's largest tirms of solicitors gave me an insight into property, litigation, criminal and company law. This was followed by a week's mini-pupillage at a barristers' chambers. During this week I attended the week's mini-pupiliage at a parristers' champers. During this week I attended the courts which dealt with small criminal matters. Having spent three weeks at Reuters courts which dealt with small criminal matters. Having spent three weeks at neuter before this, the work experience I gained confirmed that I wished to study Law at degree level. Reuters showed me the importance of the law in international business and I eventually hope to pursue a career in company law.

At School I am involved in Model United Nations and I have helped organise, re-At School I am involved in Model United Nations and I have neighbor organise, reestablish and promote the School's debating society. I have debated in front of 4000 establish and promote the School's departing society. I have debating and language delegates at a conference in The Hague and this improved my debating and language delegates at a conference in the mague and this improved my depating and language skills a strengthened my knowledge of current affairs as well as developing my self-SKIIIS a strengtmened my knowledge of current attairs as well as developing my self-confidence. In addition to my interest in debating I am computer literate and I enjoy confluence, in addition to my interest in debating I am computer interate an journalism, albeit on a small scale, as I write for the Sixth-form magazine.

Swimming is my main sport for which I have received the Bronze Medallion in Life Saving. I also play netball for the School and have joined in hockey and tennis where I class myself as a willing and enthusiastic player.

In my final year at school I have been appointed a Prefect and selected as a member of the Christmas Ball Committee and the Year Book Committee.



#### WHAT STRENGTHS CAN YOU SEE IN THE PERSONAL STATEMENT?

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### PERSONAL STATEMENT SKILLS SHEET

	ACTIVITY	SKILLS I GAINED
	e.g. member of fundraising committee	e.g. planning, organisation, communication
School experience		
Work experience		
Extracurricular		
Your choice		

## HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE COURSE YOU'RE APPLYING FOR

COURSE TITLE:
WHY HAVE I CHOSEN THIS COURSE? WHAT MAKES IT STAND OUT?
WHAT ARE THE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS? (grades, experience, anything else that can help secure a place?)
HOW MANY CONTACT HOURS A WEEK ARE THERE?

ARE THERE ANY PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATIONS?
WILL THERE BE ANY WORK-RELATED LEARNING? (sandwich year, placement, other?)
WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE? (career paths / postgraduate study, others?)
WHY DOES THIS SUBJECT INTEREST YOU?

ANY PARTICULAR ASPECTS I ENJOY? ANY SPECIFIC INTERESTS?			
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE THAT CONFIRMS INTEREST: (hobbies, work, shadowing, A level choices etc.)			

HAT MAKES ME A SUITABLE CANDIDATE	? (list your unique selling points and your strengths -	- you will expand this in your personal statement)
OW IS THIS COURSE GOING TO HELP MY	/ FIITURE?	
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Enquiry helpline: **0151 231 5090** Email: courses@ljmu.ac.uk

**Connect with LJMU** Chat to us on social media









