UK Personal Statements:

Top Tips on Mistakes to Avoid!

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TODAY’S TOPICS…

- The most common mistake from students in North America!
- And the rest!
- Recommended self-serve resources
- Q&A

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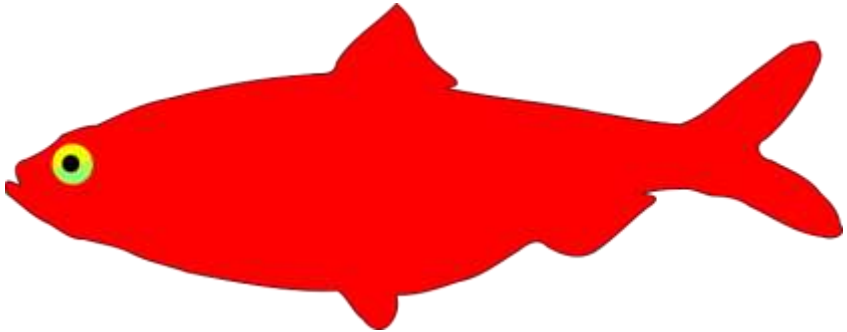
THE MOST COMMON MISTAKE FROM STUDENTS IN THE US!

The term ‘personal’ is often misunderstood!



WHAT DOES ‘PERSONAL’ MEAN?

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- Your **‘personal’ motivation** to study the **program** that you’re applying to
- Specific, unique, ‘personal’ examples that **evidence** and **demonstrate** your passion and interest for the subject that you’re applying to

WHAT SHOULD YOU INCLUDE?

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- **Why** you're **interested** in the **subject**
- **Subject passion**, inspiration and knowledge
- Areas of interest **within** your **subject**
- **Relevant** reading and what you've **learnt** from it
- What you hope to **achieve** on the **program**
- **Relevant** work experience, extra-curricular activities or qualifications and **how they relate** to your chosen **subject**
- Skills, hobbies, experience, personal qualities that **demonstrate subject interest**

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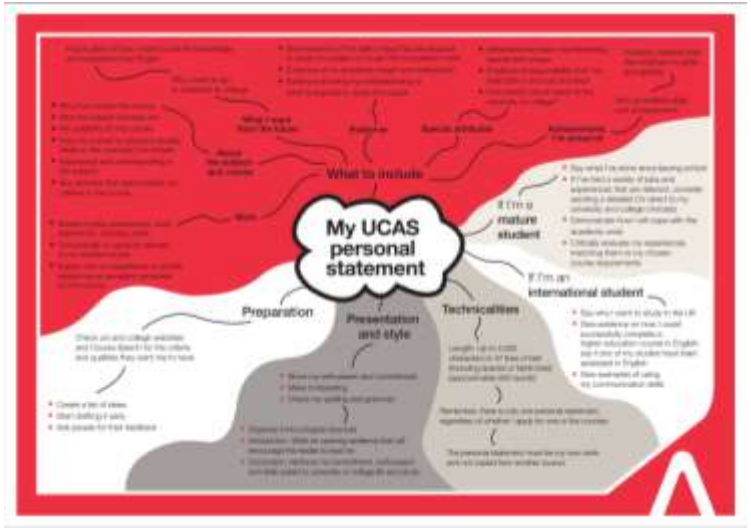
COMMON MISTAKE:
YOU DON’T HAVE TO PRESENT YOURSELF AS WELL-ROUNDED



COMMON MISTAKE:
TALKING ABOUT EXTRACURRICULARS

- **Avoid lists**
- Be **reflective** and **expand** your examples
- Follow the **ABC** rule:
  - Activity/Action
  - Benefit
  - Course

Activity 1: Which one would you rate ?
Why ?

Extra-curricular 1

‘I have been a member of a local Judo club for 6 years, receiving my first black belt last year. I greatly enjoy the training sessions every week.’

Extra-curricular 2

‘Chess has developed my analytical skills, and has trained me to cope with high-pressure situations.’

Extra-curricular 3

As a member of the XXX rugby team, I was intrigued by (Author)'s game theory analysis which concluded that the problem of drug taking in sport has more to do with the regulators who allow the 'prisoner’s dilemma' to proliferate than the athletes themselves.’

Activity 2: Which one would you rate ?
Why ?

Work experience 1

'I have undertaken internships at Eversheds, PWC, XXX Family Law and XXX Solicitors where I gained valuable work experience and skills which confirmed my aspirations to be a commercial lawyer…'

Work experience 2

'…being involved in busy law firms… As well as administrative tasks, I was also able to research areas of the law for clients. In researching conveyance laws I enjoyed the opportunity to apply the law in logical ways to various situations.'

COMMON MISTAKE:
TALKING ABOUT WIDER READING

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- Go beyond your textbooks from school
- Consider **specific** issues, theories, debates or topics that you found interesting in **specific** extracts, journals, or publications
- Be **reflective** and demonstrate **critical engagement**

Activity 3: Wider Reading

Example 1

'I regularly read The Economist and explore various other works, including the popular Freakonomics and 23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism'

Example 2

'I keep abreast of current affairs through reading journals such as XXX. Its report on XXX in the XXX edition inspired me to write an essay submitted to the XXX essay competition, considering problems and solutions to the Eurozone crisis'

Example 3

'Wanting to better understand the dynamics of BRIC economies, I came across (Author)'s article XXX. It challenged my presumption that simply gifting 'cheap grain' to developing economies is enough to lift them from poverty…'

COMMON MISTAKE:

LEAVING IT TO THE LAST MINUTE!

COMMON MISTAKE:
TALKING ABOUT YOUR QUALIFICATIONS

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- Avoid using your word count to repeat information you include elsewhere because:
  - the UCAS form has a **qualifications section** for you to enter these details
  - you can typically **email** qualification details to universities after you apply
  - you only have **4,000 characters** or **47 lines** of text to stand out!

Activity 4: Which one would you rate ?
Why ?

School Subject 1

‘My favourite subject has been Mathematics, which is incredibly challenging. I enjoy the problem-solving style of algebra and calculus, relishing the opportunity to work logically with numbers.’

School Subject 2

‘My studies in AP Calculus encouraged me to explore how techniques such as calculus and matrices may be applied to economic problems, and to discover more about this field, I read XXX *by (Author)…’*

COMMON MISTAKE:
TALKING ABOUT EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

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- Check if your universities have a separate form or way for you to declare extenuating circumstances, such as:
    - bereavement
    - ill health
    - domestic or social difficulties

COMMON MISTAKE:
AVOID GENERIC STATEMENTS

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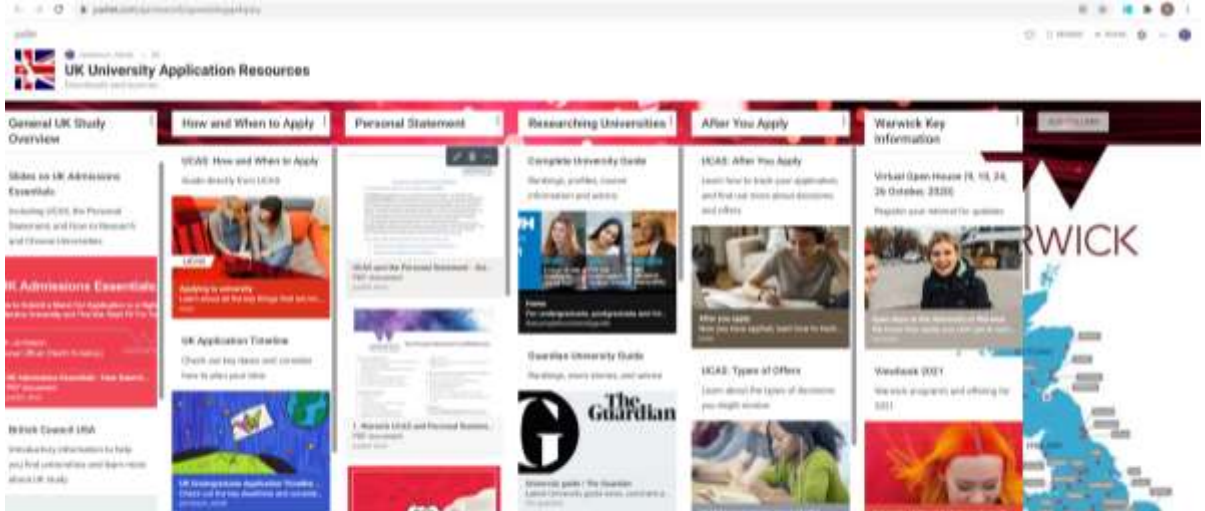
- “I want to make a difference in the world.”
- “I want to study this program so that in the future I can help bring positive change.”
- “I’ve enjoyed being an active member of Model UN, and this has led me to apply to study International Relations.”
- “I want to study Law because I want to help advance the criminal justice system.”
- **Interrogate your ideas:** articulate **specific** examples by thinking about **what, how, why, who, when, where**

RECOMMENDED SELF-SERVE RESOURCES:

- **UK University Application Resources** on **Padlet:**

https://bit.ly/33tJbUZ



FURTHER HELP:

- Check out **Warwick's Virtual Open Houses** for more Personal Statement sessions: **https://warwick.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/opendays/**

- Follow up with me (**Sarah**) at **s.jamieson@warwick.ac.uk**

- And now…**Q&A!**