

# Personal statement marking checklist

## Has the student written the statement for the right audience?

The statement will be read by a member of the university admissions team or an academic in the subject. Either way, it's an expert who knows the subject. You might find it helps to re-name the personal statement 'a statement of academic suitability for a particular course', because, well, that's what it is!

## Is the opening appropriate?

No quotes, no catchy first lines, no trying to sum up a subject in one line: "Law is one of the most important subjects" "Chemistry is all around us". The reader knows their subject (see point 1). "Since I was a child" is another one to avoid—use more mature reasons (see next point).

## Has the student included a clear reason for wanting to choose their subject?

Admissions tutors want to see reasons which demonstrate a knowledge of the subject, not exaggerated or emotive claims. Ideally these are linked to their current study programme or some wider reading they have done.

## Has the student included a section analysing relevant independent reading?

Our research showed that admissions tutors were particularly impressed by evidence of independent reading, or the ability to analyse some research (or work experience as required by certain courses). Referencing research or experience makes a personal statement sound like an essay, and that's why admissions tutors like it.

## Are any course-related activities linked to the subject they're applying for?

Applicants should avoid simply listing activities and opportunities that demonstrate their suitability for the course; there needs to be detail as to what students got out of these experiences. It is better to have fewer activities listed, but with more explanation as to what they took from them.

## Has the student explained what they mean by 'insight'?

There's no problem with the word 'insight' itself, but too often we see students declaring they have gained great insight from an activity or work experience, but failing to explain in detail what that insight was.

## Has the student checked that extra-curriculars don't exceed 25% of the PS?

Research has shown that admissions tutors are not impressed by excessive details on extracurricular activities. Just a brief summary is required.

## Is there an appropriate conclusion?

Keep the ending simple. It doesn't matter if the student doesn't have a clear career path and they certainly shouldn't make one up. Nor does the conclusion need to be attention-grabbing or witty; stick to the basics!

## Has the student maintained clear and appropriate language throughout?

Obviously correct grammar and spelling are important. But the whole feel of a piece should be reflective and clear to read, forceful or emotive wording doesn't trump ideas supported by evidence.