**Personal Statements**

**4000 Characters/ 47 lines**

Allows **you** to:

* Discover if you truly ‘love’ the subject
* Explain why you want to study this course
* Show your motivation/commitment
* Make an excellent first impression
* Sell yourselves to the Admissions Tutors
* Provide content for discussion at interview

**Structure**

Varies but **70-30** split is typical -never more than 30% extra-curricular

**70% Academic- I want to study….., I have watched/ read/ visited …… It was interesting because….**

Is there a genuine interest in your chosen subject? Where’s the evidence? What have you read? Watched? Visited? Participated? Researched? Remember here - Less Is More - Focus on a few books in detail - discuss the thinking behind them, key areas of the book, did you like/agree with the author’s views? EPQ?

**30% Extra-Curricular- In my spare time….., I had work experience, I enjoy….., I play for……, I work….**

Universities- especially the top ones- are looking for **super-curricular** activities - Things you do in your spare time that link back to your course choice. However, do not create false links - Only link your extra-curricular with your subject choice if you can. A nice example is the Physics student who enjoys table tennis and snooker, and applied physics concepts such as spin to the games.

They are looking for Thoughts/Reflection/Action - What have you done? What did you think? Why?

They are a crucial piece of evidence (alongside the projected grades and reference), especially where there are marginal decisions to be made between candidates. **They must be personal**; **they must convey genuine enthusiasm for the subject!**

**DO NOT COPY AND PASTE ANYTHING. THEY RUN ‘CHEAT CHECKS’ AND STUDENTS FROM THIS SCHOOL HAVE BEEN CAUGHT BEFORE.**

**Paragraph One**

* What sparked your interest? - talk about how you reached your decision to study this subject
* How has it been sustained? - Has taking it to A-level confirmed you want to take it even further?
* Be specific - give an example of something in the course that's really fired your interest

**Paragraph Two - Your Academic and Intellectual Curiosity**

* Books that you have read. Try to think about your independent reading. Give the title, the author, a brief synopsis and explain what it was about that book in particular that you liked/seemed relevant to you and your course. If you can, try to get to the heart of what the book was about, or take issue with it
* The journals or magazines you've read. Why do you like that particular journal, and which articles in particular have interested you?
* The recent developments in your subject that has caught your eye. Have you studied developments in behavioural economics? Or read different books on globalisation and the financial crisis?
* Your other A-Level subjects- how do they relate to your course choice? What have they taught you?
* Your EPQ

**Paragraph Three - Related interest in your subject**

* The work experience or voluntary work has you done.
* What it was about that work experience or voluntary work that (specifically) interested you?
* Any academic competitions you've entered, what did you write about? What did you learn?
* What extra courses, lectures, summer schools, and seminars have you attended? Who gave them? What impressed you? What did you take from them?

**Paragraph 4 - Extra Curricular - the subliminal messages**

* The sports you do and the level.
* Any scholarships you have, and how you have continued to excel in that area.
* Your orchestras, choirs, bands, societies and say why you like them.
* Your positions of responsibility or occasions when you've led teams. What did you learn from it?
* What takes up your free time, and why do you give it so much space in your life?
* Why you think these qualities will make you a good undergraduate?
* Some areas of your life that show you can work under pressure, to deadlines.

**Concluding Sentence**

**Example statement : PPE (Oxford)**

PPE is the ideal combination of theoretical discussions and logic juxtaposed with the analysis of current events in the world today and their historical contexts. I am fascinated by how societies interact and why they differ. Economics is vital in our appreciation of how political decisions are constrained – recently underlined in the debate in the UK on spending cuts – as well as furthering our understanding of how a society’s resources are traded amongst individuals. Taking Economics on to A-level has fuelled my interest in economic problems whilst reading the Financial Times and the Economist has kept me abreast of their relevance in the real world. Philosophy seems crucial, not only in bringing intellectual rigour to my own understanding of the world, but in addressing key issues of knowledge, morality and existence.

Politics allows us to analyse societies and the decisions that drive how they are governed; I am particularly interested in international relations and how governments interact with one another – a topic that is suffused with economic considerations. The moral implications of states often acting selfishly are also fascinating. Recent economic distress in the West and political turmoil in the Middle East have underlined the importance and relevance of studying PPE in the 21st Century.

One issue that has particularly captivated me has been that of American decline. Two lectures I attended at the LSE by Walter Russell Mead and Fareed Zakaria argued differently on the subject and I wanted to reconcile the two points of view. The Assault on Reason by Al Gore brings to light the extent to which democracy in America has been debased in recent history and the decline of its hegemonic dominance. I was able to compare the similar ways in which two spheres, wealth and power, had come together in Britain, too; Robert Peston’s Who Runs Britain? plausibly argues that Britain is increasingly governed in favour of the super-rich. I went on to write about the issue of American decline for the school’s Essay Society.

Introductory texts about philosophy such as Thomas Nagel’s What Does it all Mean? And Simon Blackburn’s Think have introduced important philosophical ideas to me, sparking an interest in the issue of free will, in particular, and confirming that I want to take the subject further. Reading Jonathon Woolf’s An Introduction to Political Philosophy, I was specifically interested by its defence of democracy on the grounds of its inherent value. The book has also improved my critical awareness of the debates surrounding issues such as liberty and equality. I fundamentally agreed more with Dan Ariely’s depiction of human irrationality in Predictably Irrational than Tim Harford’s argument for the rationality of humans in responding to incentives in The Logic of Life. I subsequently communicated with Ariely about an example of relativism in a British talent show and reviewed his book in a school magazine. I found Vince Cable’s The Storm instructive in its analysis of recent economic problems and their wider political implications.

I am bilingual in French and English and have won declamation prizes in both languages. Being secretary of the Essay and Entrepreneurship Societies as well as co-editor of the school economics magazine has improved my organisation and communication and been intellectually stimulating. Work experience in Redmond with Microsoft and with an entrepreneur launching a new soft drink in Belgium was fascinating and the dissimilarities in structure, approach and finance were particularly informative about contrasting business models in real firms. A few days in the House of Lords fostered my interest in the UK legislative process. In my free time I play as much tennis and hockey as possible and I am a keen actor, the highlight being the opportunity to play Hamm in Samuel Beckett’s Fin de Partie, last year.