

# Swansea University



Excellence Scholarships:  
£3,000 for any applicant  
who achieves three A  
grades at A Level

SWANSEA UNIVERSITY  
PRIFYSGOL ABERTAWE

[www.swansea.ac.uk](http://www.swansea.ac.uk)

# Writing the UCAS Personal Statement

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# The Benefits of Higher Education

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- Entry to graduate jobs - more jobs are becoming graduate entry so a degree is essential to compete
- *Whatever* the state of the job market, an HE qualification will mean you are better placed to secure a job
- The average graduate starting salary is £25,000

If you are concerned about finance, you should be aware that:

- Although Tuition Fees are rising to £9,000 p.a. the Welsh Government will cover the fee increase for you - so you will pay no more than current students do (approx £3,500 p.a.), wherever in the UK you study
- Student loans are available to cover your tuition fees and help with living costs
- If you are from a mid- to low-income household you will get a grant of up to £5,000 p.a. - this does not have to be repaid

# The University Application

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- For University entry in September 2012 ...  
.... Applications open this September
- University applications are centralised through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service)
- You complete an online “UCAS Form” including: Five course choices, a personal statement and a reference
- The application closing date for most courses is 15<sup>th</sup> January but *the recommended deadline is the October half-term*

# What is the Personal Statement?

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- 47 lines / 4,000 characters maximum
- A statement to demonstrate your interests, skills, qualities and achievements
- You only write one statement to support all five of your University choices - so it must be relevant to all of them
- With the reduction in the number of University places available, the statement is increasingly important in helping us choose between applicants

# The Personal Statement - What to include

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## 1. Course:

- Motivation for subject choice
- Background to subject interest

## 2. Current studies:

- Interests in current studies
- “Intellectual activities” such as fieldtrips

## 3. Careers:

- Career aspirations
- Work experience

## 4. School / college:

- Activities & achievements

## 5. Extra-curricular activities and interests

# The Personal Statement - Presenting your material

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- An interesting opening line is vital
- These are the most used opening lines:

*“I am currently studying ...”*

*“From an early age I have always been interested in ...”*

*“For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated with ...”*

- These are more original:

*“It was the plumes of steam rising from the base of the Menegai crater in Kenya that caught my attention as a keen geographer”*

*“Shellfish such as the Angel Wing Clam have exoskeletons that glow when exposed to UV light. Studying Zoology would provide me with the skills to find explanations to mysteries such as this”*

# The Personal Statement- Presenting your material

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- Support everything you say with some detail or an example -
- Without them it is meaningless - like these ...

*“Over the past year I have been working in Asda food store.”*

*“I have completed a business dynamics course.”*

- Some better examples ...

*“I love English literature and will read anything, although I class JD Salinger as my favourite author. I also enjoy poetry and here Philip Larkin is my favoured choice.”*

*“In year 11 I spent my work experience in a primary school. I worked with a class of 7-9 year olds, listening to them read and helping them with schoolwork in lessons.”*

# The Personal Statement - Presenting your material

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- Analyse your experiences
- Not like this ...

*“I was involved in voluntary work which ranged from working with nursery school children to caring for the elderly. This gave me great satisfaction.”*

*“I have been coach to my school’s under 14 football squad for the past two seasons. With organised practices at lunchtimes and after school, the squad have improved in their technical ability, enthusiasm and overall fitness. I found this very rewarding.”*

- But more like this ...

*“For the past two years I have worked part time in the local branch of H. Samuel. This position, one of responsibility and trust, has allowed me to develop my social skills through interacting with customers in store, offering help and advice over the phone and working as part of the sales team”*

# The Personal Statement - Presenting your material

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- Avoid simply listing your experiences and achievements:
- Instead of: *“I organised the sixth-form Christmas ball”*
- Try: *“Organising the sixth-form Christmas ball has ...”*
- Instead of: *“I work part time in a local restaurant”*
- What about: *“My part-time job at a local restaurant involves...”*
- Instead of: *“I am planning to take a Gap year”*
- Consider: *“During my Gap year I have arranged to ...”*

# The Personal Statement - Presenting your material

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- Good English is vital! Bad English is surprisingly common - and won't do you any favours
- Use a thesaurus to vary your language:
- *Instead of "I do"*

*Try: Accomplish, achieve, act, complete, conclude, effect, end, execute, produce, serve, transact, work*

- Avoid clichés such as *"I am fortunate enough to be able to help others"* or *"it is only by studying the past that we can understand the present"*
- Do a spellcheck and proof-read for errors
- Review, refine and hone the content of your Personal Statement so that it is polished and perfect

# The Personal Statement: *Your next step*

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- Start to think about, and note down possible opening lines
- Do read around to get ideas - but be careful as UCAS uses “similarity detection” software
- Using the five subject areas given earlier as subheadings, begin to note down experiences, activities and points you could include in your statement
- For each experience, activity or point, note down:
  - The supporting details you will include
  - What skills you gained
- It is better to write down too much, and reduce it later, than write too little and have to pad it out
- The sooner you start, and the more time you invest, the better your statement will be

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