



The Polesworth School
A SPECIALIST LANGUAGE COLLEGE

WRITING PERSONAL STATEMENTS

NOTES FOR STUDENTS AND VI FORM
TUTORS

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Writing a personal statement

Writing a personal statement is probably one of the most difficult parts of the UCAS form. Many students won't have done much creative writing since GCSE and even if you have, it's still very hard to write about yourself.

I would suggest you have a pretty good idea of what course you want to study before continuing much further with your personal statement. Generally personal statements are quite specific so if you decide to change the course you are applying for you would need to rewrite your personal statement.

Before you start remember this is a "personal" statement - i.e. it's about you, and there is no real right or wrong way to do it. What I've written below is just a guide, and should not be stuck to rigidly. You may find by choosing your own structure, and writing what you want to write about, gives a better picture of yourself to the reader than anyone else can.

UCAS advice

This doesn't really tell you much, but should tell you enough to get you started. You get a description of the personal statement, a list of bullet points of information you want to include.

Aims of the Personal statement

Many universities don't interview applicants, so the only information they have about you is your UCAS form. Most of the UCAS form only contains your details, the bits the universities are interested in is your grades, your references and your personal statement. The personal statement is the only bit you really have control over, so this is your chance to present a good image to the admissions tutor, even if your grades don't really reflect that image.

If you are applying to an oversubscribed university course, and everyone applying is likely to have good grades, the personal statement is the only thing that tells you apart from other applicants, so you want to try and make yours as good as possible.

When the admissions and subject tutors look at your personal statement, they are likely to be asking two main questions:

1. Do we want this student on this course?
2. Do we want this student at this university?

These can be broken down into a number of easier to answer questions:

- Is the student suited to the course that they are applying for?
- Does the student have the necessary qualifications and qualities for the course?
- Is the student conscientious, hardworking and unlikely to drop out?
- Will the student do their best and cope with the demands of the course?
- Can the student work under pressure?
- Will the student be able to adjust to their new environment at university?
- What are their communication skills like?
- Are they dedicated to this course and have researched it well?
- Do they have a genuine interest in the subject and a desire to learn more about it?

These are the sort of questions you need to answer in your personal statement. Unfortunately you cannot answer them directly, you need to provide evidence and make it sound believable.

Ultimately, admissions tutors are human too, and may well have hundreds of personal statements to sift through, so even if you think you've answered all these questions really well you may still be unlucky. There are other techniques you can use to make your statement stand out and appeal to admissions tutors, but remember they are all different and may have different ideas about what they look for in a prospective student. Some of these techniques are discussed in the personal goals section.

Notes about yourself

Now you have some idea of why you're writing a personal statement you need to think about what you're going to write in it. You don't need to start thinking about the wording or structure yet, just get down some ideas of the things you think you could put down.

The best way to plan this is to use a set of headings and write bullet points about how you relate to these headings. Here are some headings to think about.

What you want to study at university and why

- Specific aspects of the courses that interest you
- Examples of coursework you have completed
- Practical work you have enjoyed
- Things you have read related to the subject area
- Work experience or voluntary work in this area
- Conferences you have attended
- Personal experiences which lead to the decision to take this subject
- Where you hope a degree in this subject will lead.

Experiences which show you are a reliable and responsible person

- Part-time job
- Business enterprise
- Community and charity work
- Sixth form committee
- Helping out at school events and open days.
- Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh award, Asdan Award Debating societies and what you've gained from these experiences.

Your interests and skills

- What you like to do in your free time
- Sport and leisure activities
- Subjects you study which are not examined
- Musical instruments which you play
- Languages which you speak
- Prizes you have won or positions achieved in your interests

Why you're taking a Gap year (if you are)

- Why you want to take a gap year
- What you plan to do
- How this may relate to your course

If you're not taking a gap year avoid this section. If you are it could still be left out, but you may be asked why you're taking it at an interview.

You should now have lots of bullet points about yourself, all of which will be useful in preparing your personal statement. Don't worry too much if you don't seem to have done much off the list, just think about things you've done which show all your good qualities, or could be written as to show your good qualities.

The important thing is that you have a good reason for why you want to study the course; it doesn't matter if the reason sounds stupid at the moment - you can work on the language later. All admissions tutors will be looking for people who are enthusiastic and

passionate about the subjects they want to study, so make sure you really are. If you're choosing this course just because you can't think of anything better to do, that's not a good enough reason, and maybe you should consider looking for a course you enjoy more.

Now you've got some ideas together it's time to think about turning them into a personal statement - almost.

You and your subject

Saying why you want to take your course is possibly the most important part of your personal statement. You can have perfect grades, great extra curricular activities and be a really great person, but if admissions tutors feel you aren't committed to your course, you won't get a place.

Hopefully the notes you have written for the section above have already given you a good idea of what to write about why you want to take your course. If not then you should at least be sure you want to take that subject - writing a personal statement is a lot of work, and you don't really want to get to the end of it and decide you want to study a different subject, so before you go much further be sure you have chosen the right subject for you. Remember you don't actually have to choose the course you want to take yet, just have a rough idea of the subject area or areas you might be interested in.

Now you need to think about exactly why you want to take this subject. Even if you are 100% sure that this is the course for you, you still need to get this idea across to the admissions tutors. If they accept you, you are going to be studying this course for at least the next three years, and you need to convince them that you are committed to it. Have a think about exactly why the subject appeals to you, and write down as much as you can about it. It doesn't matter if you only scribble a few notes, you can modify them before you write the statement, and the important thing is you can be sure of the key reasons why you want to take the subject. Write down as many as you can, if you have too many you can always just pick the best. Other than that I can't give you much more advice - only you know exactly why you want to take your chosen course, but bear in mind, if you can't think of any good reasons - should you really be taking that subject?

What if I want to do a joint degree?

There are two options you can use to tailor your personal statement to joint degrees (ones where you take two subjects e.g. economics and politics). You can talk about just one subject which you feel is most important, and not mention the other. This has the advantage that you can apply for two different joint degrees and only talk about the common element e.g. for economics and politics and politics and law, you would only talk about law. If you decide to do this make sure you talk about the qualities you have which show you are suitable for the other part of your joint degree. Alternatively you can just talk a bit about why you want to do both subjects, which approach you choose will probably depend on how closely related your subjects are.

What if I want to apply for different subjects?

There is no easy way to write personal statements for two unrelated subjects. If the subjects are similar such as maths and statistics or accounting and business studies you may find you can write a general personal statement which applies equally to both courses. If this is the case you may not want to mention either of the subjects by name, and instead talk about the related work that you've already done and how you've enjoyed it.

If your subjects are totally unrelated there is no way you can write a personal statement which will cover all of them. Instead you need to come up with a statement that gives you the best chance of being accepted. For example if you are applying for one subject at four of your choices and another subject at the other two, you may just want to write a

statement related to the subject you chose to study at four universities and either forget about, or change the course at your other two choices.

You also want to consider your predicted grades in relation to the universities you are applying to. Universities which normally make lower offers are less likely to be concerned about a badly targeted personal statement, whereas for universities which make high offers, the statement will be much more important. Try and alter your statement so it is more specific to the universities which ask for higher grades, as this will give you the best chance of being offered places at all your choices.

There will probably be some cases where there is nothing you can do, for example, if you are applying for three totally unrelated subjects each at two different universities. There is no advice which will help in a situation like this, except just to consider whether this is really what you want to do. Even if you do apply for three different courses, you will only be able to study one of them, so if you can try to limit your choices to similar subjects.

Read example statements

Some people may know exactly how they are going to lay-out and write their personal statement, but for the rest of us it's a bit more difficult. Even though you now know what you're going to put in your statement, do you know how to make it read well?

As well as reading example statements and what university prospectus's say, the Brian Heap book entitled "Degree Course Offers" has always proved to be very useful. It not only details UCAS tariff points for degree courses but it also offers some good advice on what to include in personal statements for specific courses. There are also some model interview questions in the book that you may find useful. Copies can be found in the Study Centre, with Mrs Munn, and with Mr Barber.

The best way to get an idea of how to go about producing your personal statement is to look at some other people's statements. This gives you a chance to see the sort of structure and language other people use, how they explained why they wanted to study their chosen course and also their own interests and abilities.

When you read through statements have your own notes from the section above ready, if you find anything you've done but haven't already thought about note it down. Also after reading lots of personal statements you will be able to judge which ones you think are good or bad, and find parts of statements you really like or dislike, this will come in useful in the next section. There are some examples of personal statements attached to the back of this booklet.

<http://www.studential.com/personalstatements/default.asp>

Personal goals of your statement

Now you've looked at some personal statements you may have an idea of how you think yours might go. Whether you do or you don't you should have seen lots of statements which you do like, and also a few that you don't. Use this knowledge to decide how you are going to write yours. At this stage you don't need to think about structure very much just think about what you are, and what you are not going to do, to give yourself a set of guidelines to follow when writing your statement.

If you still have no idea what I'm talking about here are some example guidelines or goals for a personal statement:

Not sound arrogant and pretentious.
I would try not to start any sentences with I

Try and have an interesting phrase to start and finish on
Try not to quote books, magazines or publications and make it sound like I had only read them so I could put them on the statement
Not lie outright and stay as close to the truth as possible

Goals like this give you an idea of things to focus on and think about when writing your own statement. They also stop your statement from looking too much like one of the examples which you might have copied bits from.

Language of the statement

From looking at example personal statements you have probably found some language which you like or think works well. The first thing to remember is don't directly copy any of it - not even a single sentence! The reason is, copying statements is plagiarism, and if an admissions tutor sees a statement they recognise they will probably reject you instantly. You should also not copy single sentences for the same reason, sentences which stick out in your mind, may stick out in the examiners also. It is ok to find a sentence or paragraph which is saying what you want to say and adapt it to fit yourself though.

You need to use language which makes you sound enthusiastic about your courses and an interesting person. If you're still wondering what sort of language to use look at existing personal statements, prospectuses and on the web to find sentences which you think fit your views.

University prospectuses are a good place to look, find your course, see how it is described and see if you can work anything similar into your personal statement. Write down a list of words or sentences you would like to use like this:

to gain greater understanding of the world around you.

sends a signal to prospective employers and graduate schools

students of economics become problem-solvers.

the fact is economics affects our daily lives.

a challenging and diverse discipline

develops analytical skills, quantitative skills, research skills

It's interesting and relevant

Don't copy the sentences you find outright, change them or write your own sentence in a similar style. If you can't find any sentences you like try and write your own - it is a personal statement after all.

Structure of the statement

Now it's time to think about the structure of your statement, you should have read lots already, and may have a fair idea about how yours is going to look, but this section should clarify things a bit if you don't.

Most statements are written in an essay format, I wouldn't recommend writing it as one large block of text. Even though you can fit more words in, this just makes it hard to read.

A starting guideline is to spend half the statement talking about the course and why you want to take it, and spend the other half writing about yourself and your own abilities, though once you get into it this can be easily changed. Another approach is to split up your notes into a few categories and write a paragraph on each category. For example:

Paragraph 1: Introduction to my subject, the parts I'm interested in and why
Paragraph 2: What I had done related to my subject which wasn't on the UCAS form
Paragraphs 3 and 4: work experience and things I had done in school
Paragraph 5: My interests outside of school (also contained my responsibilities)
Paragraph 6: My goal of going to university and closing comment

Again this is only a guideline, and depending on yourself and your course you may want to change things. The last option is to simply find a statement you like and use it as a template. Take its structure and write your personal statement using this structure, being careful that you don't use any of the language mentioned there.

One important factor to bear in mind is that high-flying, discriminative universities may prefer to see at least a half to two-thirds of the statement to be academically based, by this I mean it should contain lots of information on why you are interested in that particular subject area, linked to your study at A level and, how you pursue these interests outside of school.

Spend most of your time on the start and finish of the personal statement. A good start will interest the reader and cause them to read the statement properly rather than just scanning it. A good ending will mean the reader remembers what you wrote, and hopefully will recommend you. In my opinion it's a good idea to start with why you want to take your subject, and finish with why you want to go to university or what you want to do next.

Writing the statement

Hopefully you now have your notes ready, you've thought about how you want your language and structure and the goals of your statement. Here are a few things to bear in mind before you start.

Remember the aims of a personal statement. You need to show the admissions tutor why you should be accepted on your chosen course at your chosen university. In addition to what you say in your statement, the language you use and the way it is laid out will be judged as well.

Remember you only have a limited amount of space, but don't let this put you off too much. A long personal statement can easily be trimmed down. It's harder to increase the length of a short personal statement, but if yours is too short don't worry. There is no requirement that you fill the entire space, it's better to have a short and well written statement than a long and irrelevant one.

Be positive and interesting, if there is something you are unhappy about, try to portray it in an attractive light.

Before you go, have a look at the websites and prospectuses of universities you are applying for, and see if they say anything about writing personal statements. This information would probably be written by the admissions tutors, and would give you a much better idea of what sort of things to put down.

You want to write in a way that is informative, interesting and useful. Along with writing about what you've done, try and explain why you did it, or what you think you learned from it. For example:

I currently have a part time job and this has taught me much about teamwork; responsibility and time management in the workplace.

After writing the statement

You should now have a first draft of your statement. Don't worry if it sounds disjointed, you've missed bits out or it's too long or too short, you can correct things like this later.

First read through what you've written slowly and try to read it from someone else's point of view. Make sure it's easy to read and not confusing, make sure you've said everything you want to say and not under or oversold yourself - if you are confused by reading your own personal statement, it is likely anyone else reading it will be too.

Next get other people to read it, family, friends, your tutor, Mrs Munn or Mr Barber and anyone else who you think will be able to give you a good opinion. As well as checking for spelling and grammar mistakes, they will be able to tell you if they think there is anything you've missed out.

Hopefully by looking at your statement again and showing it to other people you should have a whole bunch of changes to make to your original statement. Before making these changes, save a copy of your original statement so you can go back to it if you need too. Keep making changes, showing people your statement, and making more changes - it's not unusual for people to have done 10-20 drafts (though many do much less) before they are happy with their statement.

Good Luck!

Appendix 1

Reading Law would definitely challenge all of my interests. I feel the law is essential in providing a strong framework in which society can flourish; however it is not always perceived to be morally right. Law plays a major role in almost everything we do. People can gain compensation for injury, protection from harm and have contracts of employment. Reading Law would challenge me to think about and respond to questions which have a key role within society, as it is lawyers and politicians that are responsible for ensuring its relevance.

Attending an "Exploring Law Course" at Nottingham University encouraged me further. I now understand the diversity of the subject and the opportunities it offers. I was inspired by lectures on becoming a barrister, which is now a career path I am considering, as I believe it would best develop my strengths.

As Britain is now a prominent member of the European Union, knowledge of languages is essential in Law. Communication within the European Union is vital and the learning of languages can only benefit this cause. For this reason I have chosen to continue my education in the German language. Many countries use language to define their culture and Germany is no exception. Other European countries place far more emphasis on the learning of languages compared to Britain.

I have travelled extensively which has further developed my strong interest in European culture. Through my German course, I relished the opportunity of undertaking two weeks work experience in a German school in Kiel, whilst staying with a German family. I have kept in touch with them and intend to revisit the area in the near future. Despite the experience initially challenging my language skills, I soon managed to become immersed in the language and integrate myself in German society. I improved my confidence in speaking the language and discovered how much I could improve in a short space of time. I also had the fantastic opportunity to return to Germany on a school trip in June, allowing me to be in a position of responsibility and show my leadership skills.

I am a dedicated student, determined to reach my full potential and have taken every opportunity to do so. Whilst I have succeeded in History and English, I felt I did not achieve my goal in German in 2004. Therefore I took the decision to stay on for an extra year to improve my German and gain further qualifications. This has also enabled me to study new subjects. I have now become completely focussed and driven towards achieving my targets. My passion for learning is reflected in the variety of subjects I have chosen. The study of First World War literature allowed me to develop my critical thinking skills through analysis of poetry and texts. I attended a battlefields trip to the Somme, which was very moving and enabled the literature to be put into context. Since completing the literature course, I have read other novels by the same authors, such as Sebastian Faulks' most recent novel "Human Traces". In Sociology, I enjoy debating and studying Functionalism and Marxism, which explain how institutions such as Law and Religion play a key role for the individual and society. In Psychology, I have applied my knowledge and analysis in my coursework, which involved conducting an experiment and analysing the results.

I keep up to date with current affairs and read a wide variety of novels. I have been a member of the Warwickshire County Windband playing Saxophone and Clarinet. I find pleasure in the social aspects of music through taking part in ensembles and residential courses. I attend the gym and my main hobby is swimming. It is through this that I decided to become a lifeguard and obtain the recognised qualification (RLSS NPLQ).

My enquiring mind, motivational skills and determination lead me to believe that reading Law would be the next logical step to take and I look forward to the challenges this would create.

Appendix 2

I chose to take Psychology at A level as it appealed to me a new and exiting subject and I think I would find it challenging as a course at university because I find the subject fascinating. It is different from most subjects in that I feel that I can relate it to myself, personally. I find it interesting to see the connection between psychological theories and how these can explain what happens to us in everyday life and how we act. Psychology and the research that it involves obviously requires scientific thinking. Unfortunately I did not achieve a high grade at GCSE however, fortunately since starting the Psychology course my scientific skills have improved greatly.

From what I have studied in Psychology so far, I have enjoyed and found the topic area of conformity I carried out most interesting. Specifically within the area of conformity I carried out work on a film called "Twelve Angry Men". This involved minority influence and I was interested to see how the views of others could be affected by the persuasive techniques of the minority, which in this case was just one man. I also enjoyed the abnormality as with it comes the aspect of discovering new things about disorders such as anorexia and bulimia, why they might occur and who might be most likely to suffer from them. I find Psychology both challenging and enjoyable as I think it is a subject which requires concentration to accept the opinions and theories of other. I also enjoyed the topic of attachment in Psychology because I found the facts and statistics within in, both interesting and thought-provoking. As well as studying Psychology at AS level, I take Sociology which is closely connected to Psychology. In Sociology, I have enjoyed the topic of crime and deviance. I believe Sociology adds a social dimension to this topic, whereas Psychology concentrates on the individual. I found both subjects extremely exiting at AS level and achieved a grade B in both of them. The third of my A level courses is English. This has dramatically increased my vocabulary, reading and language skills. Also within the course I enjoyed a novel called 'Wise Children' which deals with norms, values and changes in society. My ultimate career plans are to join the police force and therefore a degree in Psychology would help me significantly as not only would it enable me to join the force at a higher level, but it would give me a better understanding of why crime is committed and would enable me to use the techniques and skills learnt on the course effectively in the job. I have been interested in joining the police force from a very young age and I feel I would make a good police officer because I am inquisitive and hardworking. Psychology would provide an important foundation for me as I feel it would give me a better understanding of crime, and a recognisable advantage from an employable prospective.

I currently have a part time job as a despatch operative at The Sandwich Factory. I work weekends and during holidays. I enjoy my work as it means I meet new people. From my job I have acquired various skills such as dealing with public and working as a team. This I think will help me in later life as a police officer.

My hobbies and interests include much sport and music. In secondary school I achieved both grade 1 and grade 2 certificates for keyboard. I am enthusiastic about sport and keeping fit. I enjoy tennis, football, badminton and squash. I also attend a local gym once a week. In 2003 became a member of Spital Tennis Club and very much enjoyed playing as well as improving my tennis skills. However, I had to cease attending when work intervened. I also used to play for Drayton Manor Football Club. Currently I play sports regularly with friends.

At University I am therefore looking forward to meeting new people and involving myself in academic life. I am eager to begin my studies in Psychology, a subject for which I have a passion and I know is the course for me.

Appendix 3

I have always been enthusiastic in sports and Physical Education starting from childhood playing sports such as football and tennis. This interest continued with representing district and being selected to visit and participate in the Leicester football academy for the day. The trip furthered my interests in football and the long-term benefits of Sport and Exercise, hence the decision to pursue the subject at degree level. At University I look forward to carrying on with Sports Science and with studying Sports and Nutrition to further my knowledge.

As a school prefect I have held many responsibilities such as organising school events, and participating actively on the school council. This experience has promoted leadership skills, taught me to use my own initiative and developed my confidence.

Playing in various school sports team has maintained my enthusiasm for sport and made me aware of the benefits sports bring such as the physical (aerobically) and also the social benefits such as communication, teamwork and self-reliance, important throughout life. In addition to this being Captain of the football team has promoted leadership skills. Currently I am waiting to hear if I get into my county team in which I recently went on trial for. If I get in this means I will be representing Warwickshire for football.

For the school, I played in every game, including the season recently, when we maintained a 100% winning record. This along with the prefect duties has taught me the importance of communication, teamwork and self-confidence.

I have had a part time job since the age of 15 at a successful hotel, restaurant in which I have waited and also helped out behind the bar on occasions. Helping me with the socialising aspect of having to meet and work with new people and also promoted a range on new skills. These skills will be beneficial to me for the whole experience at university.

Throughout my A Levels I have especially enjoyed studying Sports Science, learning about the biomechanical, physiological, and psychological factors in sport. I wish to expand my knowledge further with Sports and it has also been an interest of mine with the benefits of health and exercise therefore I think Sports and Nutrition would be the right course for me. Also if I cannot get into Sports and Nutrition then I would look forward into progressing in Sports Science and Psychology as I already study both these subjects and enjoy them both.

Overall, I think that I have all the necessary qualities to be successful at University. I am extremely committed to Sport and to pursuing a career in this area. I have excellent interpersonal skills and am very self-motivated. I feel that I will flourish as an individual at University.

Appendix 4

I have always been interested in society and what happens in every day life. I took Sociology as one of my subjects for my A-levels and found it intriguing. It left me wanting to learn more about the subject. This is why I feel that Social science, especially the area of Social work would be the perfect course for me to read at university.

I have always wanted to help people have a better chance at life. For instance one area which I would like to specialise in is children. I want to help them have a better life, whether it is in education or in the home and eventually would like a career in Social work.

From my A level study of sociology I have learnt a lot about society and it has changed the way I view the world. I have a better understanding and broader knowledge and I want to put them to use.

At university I look forward to increasing my knowledge of sociology and learning more about social work practice. I also intend to make the most of a wonderful experience and look forward to gaining practical experience from work placements.

Other subjects which I have studied through 6th form have been History and Religious Studies.

I feel that these subjects have contributed to my interest in Social Work because they have taught me to show empathy and understanding towards other people and their problems. The subject that has most contributed to this is Religious Studies. Within Religious Studies, I studied situation ethics; this helped me look at how to evaluate each situation as it comes. This will be a useful skill to have when studying Social science and Social Work.

History has taught me not to accept things at face value, but to analyse what sources and historians say. This has helped me because it gives me a way of looking at things from different angles. This will be useful for Social science and Social Work as I would have to look at different situations and analyse them.

Even though these subjects have increased my skills, the subject that has helped me the most would be Sociology. Sociology has increased my awareness and knowledge of the world. Looking at all aspects of society, including; the family, education, religion and crime and deviance. This has given me a clear understanding of society

Throughout the past two years, I have had a part-time job at the De Vere hotel The Belfry. While working there, I have picked up a number of communication skills through working on Room Service, answering the phone. I am punctual and polite to customers. This has developed my interpersonal skills which will be invaluable when interacting with clients.

Between finishing my GCSE's and starting 6th form, I worked as a receptionist. I took this opportunity to achieve an understanding of the world of work.

Outside of school, I go to the gym. This helps relieve any stresses and strains which have built up through the day. It leaves me with a clear head and ready to pursue the day ahead. A hobby of mine is painting, I find painting relaxing and soothing, I firmly believe that a work/life balance is essential to health and look forward to continuing with these hobbies at university.

After university, I intend to pursue a career in Social Work.

I look forward to the opportunities and challenges that university will offer me. I am hard working and completely committed to my studies, I am confident that I will do well and be very successful.

Appendix 5

Ever since the first time I heard my father mention stocks and shares I have had a very keen interest in the field of economics. This mention led to an explanation and only a year later to my very first shares in a small pan European auction company named QXL Ricardo PLC. These shares have done extremely well with the share price rising until just after I sold them. I was, and still am, very pleased with this as I researched and selected the company myself. I next took this interest further into finance, I began to read the Financial Times looking for ways in which to learn more about the stock market and perhaps search for my next purchase. It was in this somewhat narrow field of economics that my interests remained until I began my AS level Government and Politics course. A large part of my motivation for taking this course came from its ties with economics, and also the rules under which the market place is controlled. Through this course I have learned about many of the varying types of economic models such as Keynesianism, and also many key figures in economic history such as Adam Smith.

My second AS level choice was Mathematics. I have always had a keen interest in this field. I am of a more technical mind, interested just as much with what goes on behind the scenes to achieve a result as I am in the end result itself. Mathematics has, at all levels enabled me to revel in this. I have enjoyed both the AS and A level courses and all they have had to offer me as a far greater range of topics have been covered in them than the GCSE course which I completed. My other two course choices at AS level were Physics and Chemistry, my reason for choosing them, much the same as the Mathematics course. As I previously mentioned I have a keen interest in what takes place out of view and behind the scenes to enable models and all manner of everyday things to work in the way they do. From this point of view I could see no better AS level choices for enabling me both to learn about this, and furthermore apply this knowledge. When starting my second year I decided to drop Physics. I had always intended to do so with either this or Chemistry as they were my two choices that were most alike, so in doing so I tried to ensure that I was not limiting my options.

From around 2001 to 2003 I ran a successful web design business designing, publishing and maintaining websites and other systems for a number of small companies in my local area. It was a great joy to do and I enjoyed being able to think for myself and organize my own time. However above all else I loved being treated as an equal, and having my views and opinions valued and often implemented by accomplished businessmen, especially as I was only around 15 years of age at the time. The one thing I was unable to do, as I was still at school was expand, at the time this was a large frustration as everything was going so well. However I deemed it sensible to ensure it did not soak up too much of my time. This experience has made me want to go into the business world after I complete my education - perhaps with my own company; I am still undecided in this. I believe that a degree in economics will serve as a great help for me in getting a step up into this competitive world.

Appendix 6

I have never had a doubt in my mind about the subject that I would like to study at university. Some of my earliest memories are those of going to bed with a large pile of books and devouring every one of them before the evening was through. Since then I have always had a voracious appetite for literature and read everything I can get my hands on from the small print on the back of bus tickets to Tolstoy's 'War and Peace.' Most of the books I read are the classics and perhaps my favourite book is 'Wuthering Heights.' I have been compelled to read it again and again, and each time it is just as haunting and emotive as the first time. But I believe that I have read most of the mainstream classics by Austen, Dickens and Eliot et cetera and so recently I have become interested in the work of slightly more abstract, philosophical writers such as Camus and Kafka. I am particularly inspired by authors who question the grounded moral laws and institutions in our society through their bold styles and observations.

Writing has also played an equally major part in my life and I wrote my first full-length novel when I was nine. As to the quality of my writing at this time I'm not sure, but the patience and will was there at a very young age.

I have always been known as 'The Writer' out of my circle of friends. On more than one occasion I wrote the class plays in my primary school and then between the ages of ten and twelve I had three poems published in anthologies for young writers. I wrote another novel when I was fourteen and for a year I dedicated my life to the alternate world that I had created, evolving characters out of nothing into entities that I fell utterly in love with. For your average emotionally unstable teenager it was the perfect outlet for escaping the social pressures that many people of my age dealt with in different ways.

Despite the fact that I am normally animated and jovial, I have also spent a lot of time in solitude, immersed in the pages of novels. I am quite ashamed to say that I missed most of the Disney World parade this year because I was just too absorbed in Thomas Hardy's 'Far from the Madding Crowd.' I almost wondered why Sergeant Troy's dramatic death wasn't on the holiday video footage!

In recent years I have also taken an obsessive interest in poetry. I have a fairly large selection of poetry in my room ranging from the anthologies of various poets to collections from individuals. After studying Philip Larkin in year 12 English Literature I became a huge fan of his style of writing and practised similar techniques in my own poetry. I also particularly like the work of Sylvia Plath, Pablo Neruda and Brian Patten.

I have also immensely enjoyed my involvement in extra curricular drama productions and I have always had a great love and respect for the theatre. Throughout my time at school I have been the chairperson of the school council, a prefect, a bully mentor and a student librarian and I am very fond of all of my A-Level choices. Outside of school I also take pleasure in my job at Twycross Zoo, which involves much interaction with the demanding and often aggressive public! I also spend my Saturday mornings looking after children with severe autism, which is extremely rewarding.

I plan to have a career centred around reading and writing, possibly in publishing. I am greatly looking forward to committing all of my energies to the subject I adore and pursuing a greater knowledge of literature and writing throughout my time at university.

Appendix 7

A probate case, conveyance case and a marital case leading to a custodial hearing - these are just a few examples of work I was involved in during my work experience at Garner Canning Solicitors. My interest in law first came in the early stages of Year 9 after completing a careers match test. The work experience marital case confirmed my thirst for law, and now is my chosen subject at degree level. It was also the marital case in particular that I found motivating made me realise that I did have strong views about fair treatment, equal rights and justice. Later this year, I will be doing further work experience placements at Birmingham court to get a different perspective on the criminal justice system. From my current knowledge of our justice system I believe that it is one of the fairest in the developed world. However, in response to the proposed Terrorism Bill, where suspects could be held for up to 90 days without trial, which is proposed to come into effect on March 14th, when the existing anti-terrorism laws expire I believe that the Bill is an infringement of human rights. The country should be protected from terrorism, but not at the expense of the people. It is issues like this that make me want to study law.

As part of my History course I have particularly enjoyed studying the rise of Hitler, and how he used the law to gain and keep power. I have particularly enjoyed the War literature in English which was enhanced by the Battlefields trip I made in June. I enjoy Philosophy and Ethics, as I like arguing moral issues that I feel strongly about, and which also present issues in law, such as genetic engineering and euthanasia. I also believe that this will be relevant to the Ethics unit in law, which includes Crime, Justice and Punishment, all aspects of the law that I have strong feelings about.

I have undertaken work experience at a local primary school and I am a member of Millennium Volunteers, where I have received my 100-hour certificate. This has given me considerable experience working with people, which will be beneficial for my future career. I work with key stage 2 children and I work there with 4 other volunteers in my own time. The group is designed to be a social group for youngsters where they can do drama and other activities. I enjoy it because I am in the community and helping people. This simply increases my desire to read law, as the degree will allow me to help people in the community, and help them win justice. This has also increased my overall confidence and commitment to projects that I feel strongly about.

My part-time jobs at Matalan and as administrative assistant at my school have given me analytical, time-management and people skills. I was also a school prefect in Year 11 for which I received management and team building training. I also enjoy swimming and badminton.

I believe that I am a suitable candidate for law as I know what it is like to have to fight for what you want and achieve what you want, because of my year out of school due to illness. This has also increased my motivation and strength of character and made me more determined to strive for what I believe in. My ambition is to become a solicitor and through this help others to gain justice and as a result of my educational experiences I feel that I have developed the skills necessary for a law degree. I look forward the opportunities that university can offer.

Appendix 8

Sport has always been a crucial part of my life. I find it hard to imagine my life without sport because I am involved with it in so many ways. Over these past years I have become more involved in sport due to its health benefits, as I believe sport is a way of finding out more about your own health and fitness. Sport is a great way to interact with other people, which I think is important in any part of life. I had no hesitation in choosing Sports Science as an 'A' level and I enjoy Sports Science the most because there are so many interesting factors. I enjoy the practical side because it gives me a chance to use my Tennis skills as a way of learning and getting an excellent grade in my exams. Although my favourite part of the course would be the practical side, I also enjoy learning about the Biomechanics, such as Newton's 3 Laws of motion and Psychological part, which involve learning how personality can affect a player's performance. For my Synoptic Unit I am studying Rafael Nadal the second ranked tennis player in the world because I admire him not only for his skill and brilliance on the tennis court but because of his passion for the game, which I feel is similar to mine; he always want to pick up a tennis racket every moment of everyday and just play or practice and that is exactly what I want to do. Tennis is sport I have most developed in, this is because I have been learning to play since I was a child and have been playing for 7 years now, I find myself a good tennis player, at county level of competence.

I have always wanted to build my future around sport and by choosing this subject it made me reinforce my desire to pursue a career in it, careers which appeal to me are coaching, because I have always thought of myself as a good teacher of sport and skills especially in tennis, I find that sport development would be a good career to follow so that I could use my own aims to help progress sport in the country especially in sports such as tennis. I feel strongly on the lack of tennis being played by young people in this country, schools do not seem to offer it in PE as much as they do in other countries and I want to be able to change that. I am a member of Netherseal Tennis Club, and a former member of Spital Tennis Club, these two clubs have taught me a lot about my tennis, I went to Portugal for some overseas training and I was amazed of how much better it made me. At Spital, I used to help coach the younger members.

My other interests outside the basic sporting world are motorbikes, Moto Grand Prix more specifically, I am fascinated with the risk people take for sports and it shows how passion and emotion are so important, especially when travelling at 200mph and over, I enjoy computing as it was one of my AS levels and music of all forms. I am studying three subjects other than Sports Science, and they are English Literature, History and General Studies. English Literature I enjoy the studying of the First World War literature, I went with the school on a trip to France to see the Battlegrounds of the First World War, I enjoyed it a lot and it was a valuable experience to my course as well as opening my eyes to the horror of 'The Great War'. History I find very interesting, I enjoy the European history side more than the British grabs my attention much more.

For my Work Experience I was at Powertrain Ltd an MG Rover supplier where I gained valuable knowledge about teamwork and co-operating as a group, which relates to working in sport, so it was relevant to my career.

I am looking forward to the prospect of reading Sports Science. None of my family has been to university and I shall be the first. University will be something to look forward to and I will enjoy meeting new people, making new friends and getting involved in all aspects of university life. I aim to do well, enjoy the challenge of studying my chosen subject in depth and look forward to a successful career.

Appendix 9

During my time in education I have always enjoyed studying History and this led me to study Government and Politics in 6th Form. This has become a subject I thoroughly enjoy and I have developed a keen interest in the way our country is being run and how the United Kingdom fits into the European and global communities. I am particularly interested in the links between the type of government and economic prosperity within a country. For example, Africa is the richest continent on the planet in terms of resources, yet is also the poorest. Is this down to economic policies or corrupt government? Britain, USA and China are politically very different from each other, yet all have very strong economies. How are three different styles of government all thriving economically where Africa is failing? Would European countries be more competitive against the rise of the Far East as the United States of Europe or by employing protectionism to safeguard European companies? By studying Economics and Politics, I hope to develop my understanding of economic policy and find answers to these types of issues.

Following my interest in the politics of the third world, I will be visiting Ghana in the summer of 2007 for 5 weeks as part of a volunteer group called Gap Sports where I will be working alongside other young people from different backgrounds and countries to coach football. The trip will allow me to pursue my interests in sport in a different culture and enable me to experience first hand the extent of Ghana's economic and political problems. As a volunteer I am funding the trip through sponsorship and part-time holiday work at the local zoo. We have many foreign and disabled visitors which has provided me with an opportunity to develop my communication skills with people from all walks of life.

The topics which have particularly inspired me to continue my study of Politics are the functions of pressure groups and electoral systems. I am currently working on my History coursework for which I decided to study the constitution of the Weimar Republic. This links with my work in Politics as it deals with the effects of proportional representation and the weaknesses in the constitution which Hitler exploited in his rise to power. The problem solving aspect of Maths is one that I have always enjoyed, offering a scientific approach in contrast to History and Politics. The challenge of studying a broad range of subjects at 6th Form has allowed me to remain open minded regarding my career plans. I believe my time at University will considerably shape my future and whether by studying at PhD level or entering the world of work, I have high expectations of my first three years in Higher Education.

My interests outside school include computers and sport, in particular football, cricket and athletics. The opportunity to play competitively for local and school teams in football and cricket has taught me the benefits of working with others and the importance of co-operation. Competing in athletics for both the school and my local club has taught me self-motivation and I hold the school record for 200m, an achievement of which I am very proud. I hope to continue playing sport competitively and socially whilst at University, as well as taking advantage of the opportunity to try new activities.

My decision to study Economics and Politics will link my strengths and interests in Maths and Politics, and my background in History will help me to understand present and future problems. I feel that I am well prepared to meet the challenge of higher education and will flourish both academically and socially at university.

Appendix 10

During my high school years, I took the opportunity to visit Iceland with other students and staff. Walking in a small group alongside a glacier I felt a rumble throughout the ground, and a large piece of glacial ice fell into the melt-water around it.

This amazing experience inspired me in my already growing passion for Geology, to discover how these forces work. My personal collection of rocks, minerals and fossils includes ammonites from Dorset, Citrine from Brazil, amethyst and coral from the Isle of Wight, obsidian from Iceland and Geodes from North America. When I have completed my degree I intend to return to Iceland to continue my studies and view the incredible geological landscapes with my new found knowledge.

Throughout the A level Geography course I have always preferred the physical aspects, more so plate tectonics and volcanoes. This is partly due to understanding the history of the planet and what we, as geologists, can learn from it.

I am studying Chemistry at A level, which I find very interesting; particularly the organic reactions like Alkanes and hydrocarbons and their contributions to the structure of Petroleum. Biology is my second science at A level and I enjoy studying the diversity of species and the ranges of flora and fauna, in their given environments.

I studied Physics at AS, which has given some insight and help in understanding other Biological and Chemical processes.

Outside school, I have a strong interest in Archery and was a member of a club, and in one session achieved 6 arrows in the centre target. In sporting terms, I have played Hockey regularly throughout my secondary school and at one point played in the Under 14's boy's team for the Tamworth Hockey Club.

Whilst at school, I took part in many extra-curricular activities and took advantage of the on-site Air Training Corps. Within a year I achieved Cadet First Class. In the ATC I took part in many activities including marches and drills, weapons training courses, and basic flight training.

When I successfully join a university I would like to try at several other sports and activities. One in particular would be fencing, partly because of its links to medieval weaponry and secondly due to its unusual nature.

In the remaining part of the year before I go to university I am going on an A Level trip to Rome and Sorrento. Whilst in Rome I'll be spending time in the Colosseum, the Vatican and the Roman Forum to get a real feel for current and ancient Roman culture. Then we will travel south to Sorrento and spend some time in Naples, visit Pompeii and Herculaneum, visit the island of Capri and then climb Mount Vesuvius.

I am thoroughly looking forward to my trip to Rome, especially all the sites of geological interest, and I am sure that once again my interest in Geology will be fed by this trip. The climb up Mount Vesuvius will fill me with awe, as did the glacial landscape of Iceland. But, to see these sights with the Geological knowledge only a university degree could give me would be incredible.