



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

School  
of  
English.

## What to put in a Personal Statement

Our degree programmes are very competitive, and so personal statements are extremely important in helping us to come to a judgment as to which applicants should be made offers. Therefore the more convincingly you can show what is particular, interesting and compelling about your application, the better.

Some of the subjects we offer - Linguistics, for example – are quite different from many subjects taught at A-level. In such cases it is particularly important that you demonstrate you understand what the new subject area is about and that you genuinely want to study it at university. This is especially important if you are not taking English Language A-level (Language/Linguistics applicants), or for Language/Literature applicants who are only taking one of those subjects at A-level. If you are applying for a dual degree you should demonstrate knowledge of and interest in both subjects.

So, plan your statement carefully. Getting a proper balance is important. Be specific. Be clear. Be coherent.

We can only go on what is there, and so it is important to make a good first impression. Passion; original, independent thinking; breadth and depth of reading; a broad interest in learning; a desire to develop your understanding of the subject(s); engagement with the world around you through extra-curricular activity – these are the qualities which we are looking for.

### We suggest you include the following:

An opening section demonstrating your **interest in the subject(s) you are applying for**. It's always best to get our attention with this right at the beginning in a clear and original way.

- Give concrete evidence of your genuine passion for the subject

A further section demonstrating your **knowledge about the subject(s) you are applying for**.

- What do you know about the subject? What have you read? (Through your school studies and/or independently).
- What aspects particularly interest you? How does the subject relate to your own experiences and interests, or to your previous studies? (Give examples of topics you enjoy; ideas that spark your imagination; issues you feel passionate about)

A further section demonstrating your **commitment to academic study in Higher Education**.

For example:

- You could talk about your achievements (What you have particularly enjoyed studying? What skills have you acquired? Have you done anything you consider to be especially original?)
- You could also talk about your readiness for independent learning and critical thinking at university level.

A section telling us **about yourself** (your interests, hobbies, extra-curricular experiences, career aspirations, etc.)

Conclude your statement with a (beautifully crafted!) sentence which **sums up** your application.

Of course you may organise your statement as you wish. The critical issue is not the number of paragraphs but the weighting within your statement – there should be more on the subject you are applying to study than on extra-curricular activities.

We **welcome originality** in the way personal statements are written, but it is also important to demonstrate your genuine interest in the subject(s) you are applying for. And don't forget to check it for grammatical and spelling errors!