

HEO's 2026 Guide: WRITING YOUR UK PERSONAL STATEMENT

This guide includes

- Key Application Information
- Important information for those with NS
- What makes a good personal statement
- Final tips and reminders

KEY APPLICATION INFORMATION

Essential to-dos and deadlines



The application portal: UCAS

- All students apply via RI as your centre. Refer to our UCAS guide, available in IVY HEO (Y6s) and open web (alumni), from mid-Jul, for how to set up your account.
- Do **not** create accounts prior.
- Students applying for UCAT/LNAT: you can register for these without a UCAS account first, and go back to your UCAT/LNAT account in Jul, to put in your UCAS ID. This is fine.



The deadlines to adhere to

- Oct deadline (Oxbridge/Med/Vet/related): **Sun, 4th Oct 2026, 2359h.**
- Jan deadline (non-Oxbridge/non-Med): **Wed, 6th Jan 2027, 2359h.**

Refer to **Timelines** for more details. Please adhere to these deadlines. This is as a UCAS app is considered complete only after student & teacher are done; your teachers can only do their parts *after* you have submitted. Please help us help all of you thus. **HEO is unable to guarantee that any app put in after the internal deadlines can reach your universities in time.**



Additional tests

- All students register for tests independently.
- [LNAT for law](#), [UCAT for Medicine](#). University-specific tests--such as TMUA, ESAT, TARA--can be registered for via [UAT-UK](#).
- Refer **carefully** to your specific major/universities for the relevant tests to take, and the time to take them by.
- Ensure you register **on time** for these tests. Be as early as possible!
- **Important for Y6s:** there is a range of dates to take these tests. **Avoid taking tests on the A-Level Science Practical dates.** In particular, headsup on H2 Chemistry A-Level Practical on **14th Oct Wed: avoid this.** (Refer to **Timelines** for detailed information.)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THOSE WITH NS



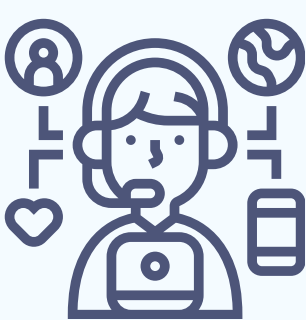
Indication of deferral for National Service

- State explicitly in UCAS when, exactly, you can enrol (Fall 2028 or Fall 2029?)
- Refer to our UCAS guide (mid-Jul) for how to do this.
- Be cautious in checking your app prior to submission, that this indication is done rightly.



Majors & universities that do NOT grant 2 year deferrals

- **Medicine:** invariably no deferral, max one year. Check carefully on each university's website, on your year of application, as things do change annually.
- **Mathematics:** invariably does not grant 2 year deferrals. Check directly with each university.
- **LSE:** All majors do **not** grant 2 year deferrals.
- This means that all Y6s with NS who are interested in these majors/university should **not** be putting in apps this year.



I have NS and am interested in these majors/university. What should I be doing then? OR: I have NS and I'm not fully prepared to put in apps this year.

- Avoid FOMOing and putting in needless apps this cycle.
- Focus on completing your A-Levels well. Should you have the bandwidth, start exploring **academically** beyond the H2 syllabus, in your areas of interest. This gives you things in write about in future.
- With NS, you are in **no rush** to apply. Hence, take the time to discover which majors you really want, and strengthen your academic mastery of the relevant subjects.
- Applying in NS with firm results in hand can be helpful as it clears up the picture on where your strengths and interests lie. You can also take the time to prepare for the necessary tests. You do **not** need to take additional tests this year hence - the results are only valid for the year of application.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PERSONAL STATEMENT

TL:DR

The UCAS statement is **academically-focused**. Your aim is to demonstrate **interest and ability** to pursue your desired major. **Q2 is the key focus thus.**

Interest is shown via the **range of activities and experiences** you have taken part in, **related** to your desired major. This can be from Sec 3 to now. The more recent the better.

Ability comes through in the **academic analysis** of your activities and experiences, and in the **real-world awareness** you demonstrate of the subject/field of work.

YOUR FOCAL POINT: SUPERCURRICULUM

This refers to any activity of learning done, beyond the H2s. They may be formal or informal.

E.g.:

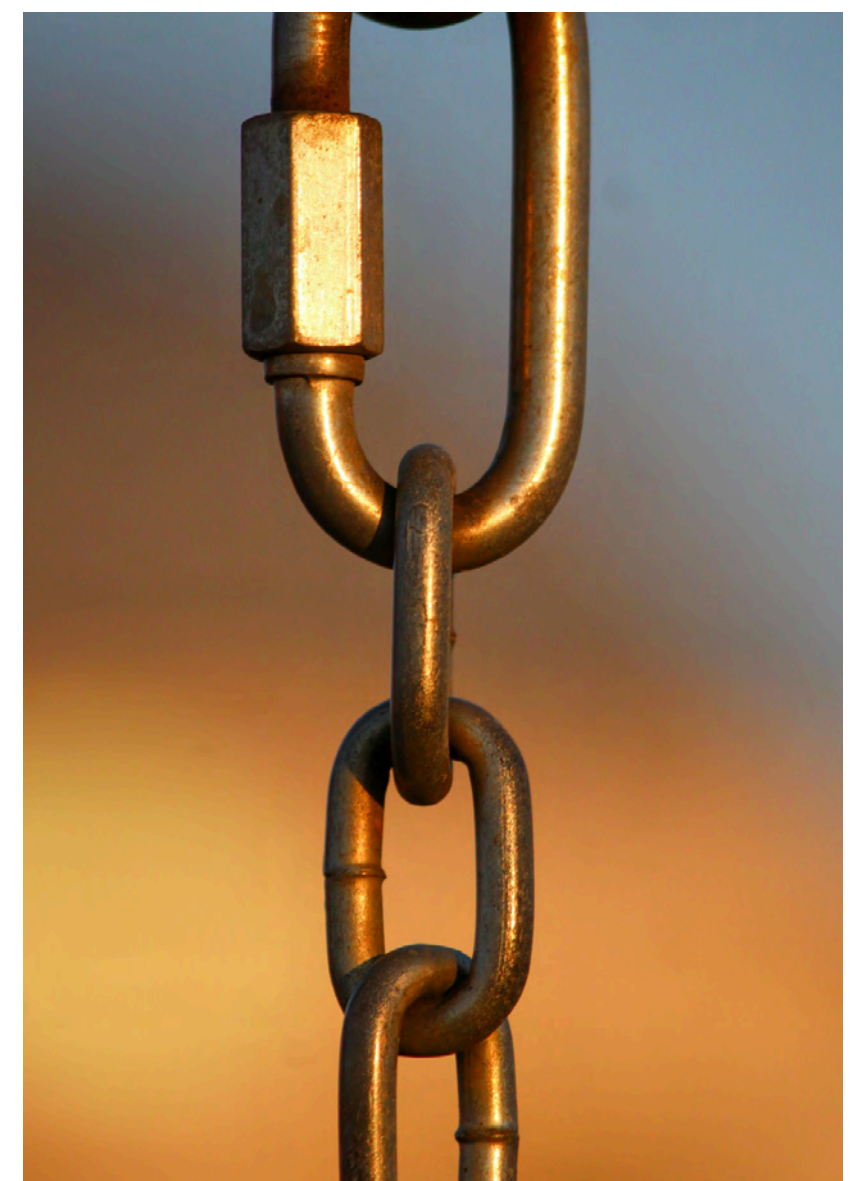
- Further, independent learning: readings, podcasts, journals, etc.
- Seminars, workshops, sessions, online courses.
- Academic competitions, subject presentations, symposiums, etc.

In all that you may raise, what is critical is the **analysis of the specific academic concepts mentioned**. Avoid laundry-listing. Students often assume competitions and medals matter: this is untrue. You have more academic depth from an independent analysis of a reading than from simply listing a medal.

INTERDISCIPLINARY MAJORS

If you are writing for an interdisciplinary major (e.g., Politics, Philosophy and Economics; Economics and Management; Computer Science and Mathematics): your focus is on **why and how** the disciplines intersect, and on elucidating the relationship between the disciplines. How does A underpin B, for instance, or how does A impact B, and vice versa?

Avoid 'chunking': e.g., one paragraph on Politics, one paragraph on Economics. This lacks the academic understanding of how the disciplines affect one another. Your analysis should be based on exploring the **relationship between the disciplines**.



THREE PARTS TO THE UCAS STATEMENT

Refer to:

- General: [UCAS official guide to the personal statement 2027](#)
- Subject-specific guides: [Personal statement guides \(subject-based\)](#)



The UCAS statement has **three** questions. The character count of 4,000 includes spaces. Each question has a minimum count of 350 characters.

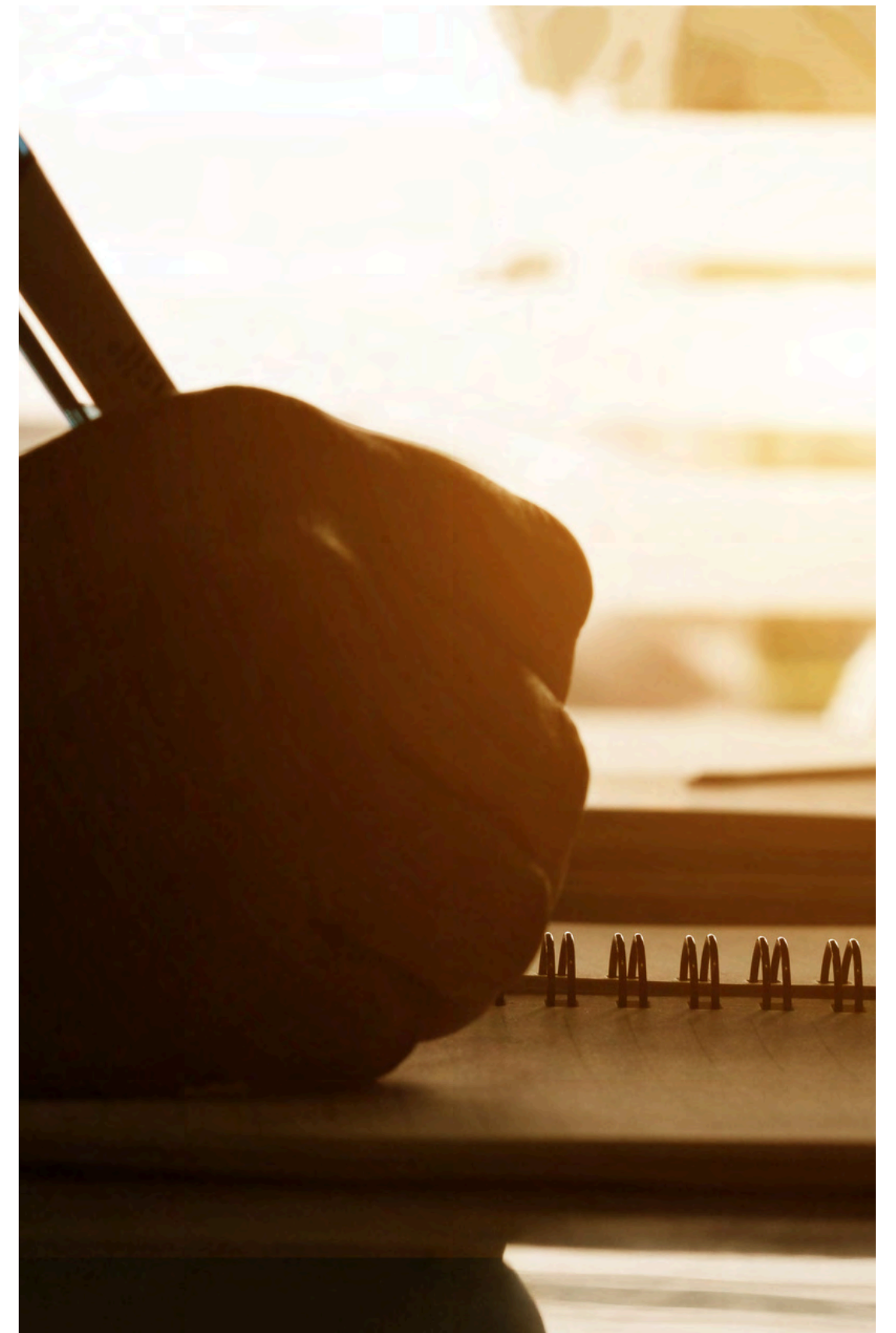
The three questions are:

- 1) Why do you want to study this course or subject?
- 2) How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?
- 3) What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

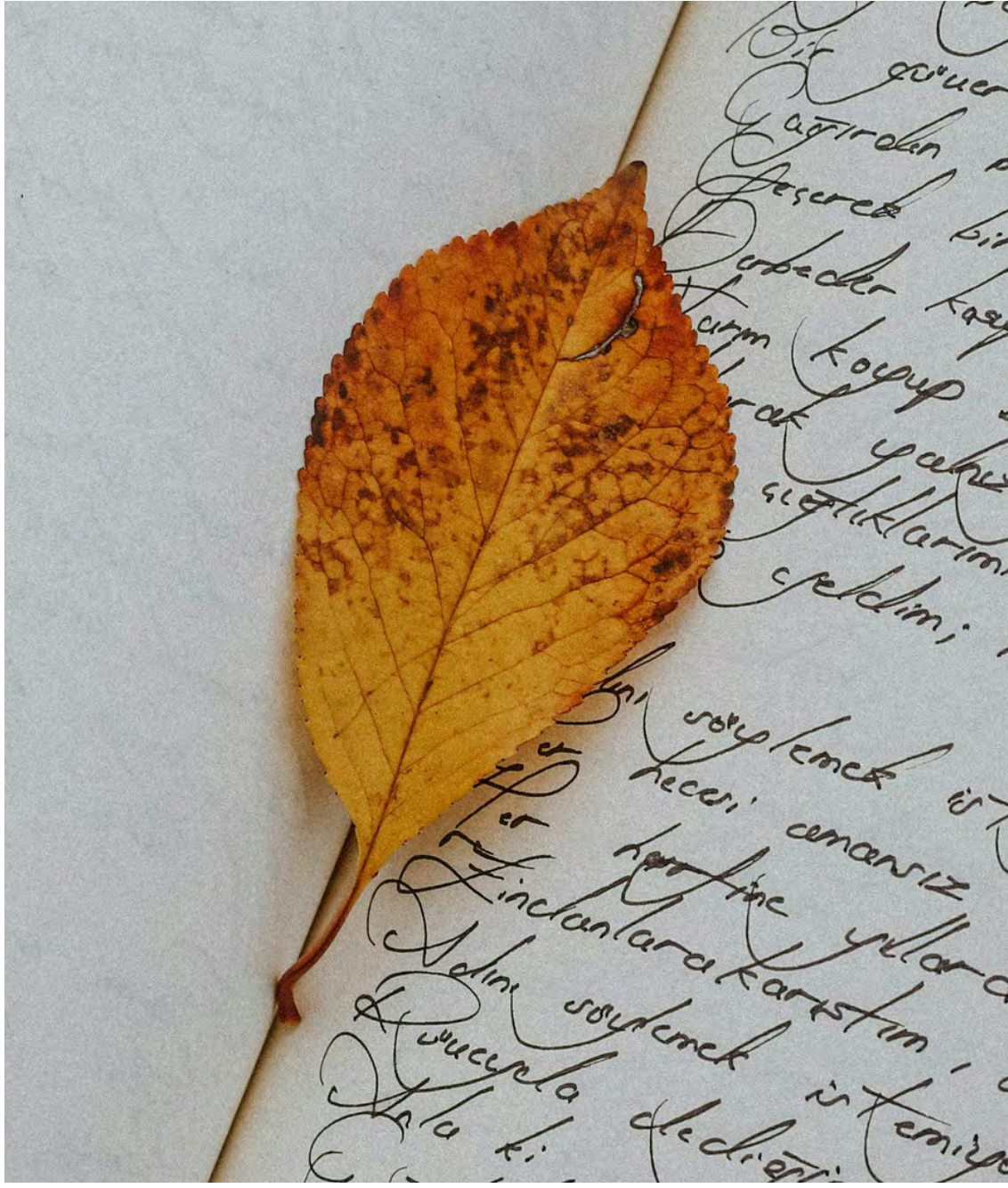
HEO'S ADVICE

Q2 should be the main focus of your statement. Use the most of your character count for this section (i.e., up to 3,300 characters), as this is where you have the opportunity to demonstrate your **academic interest and ability**, thereby demonstrating fit for the major of interest. To keep in mind that the *study* of a field is different from the *practice* of it: you are attempting to demonstrate suitability for the former. Hence, keep a sharp academic focus.

Q1 and Q3 should be dealt with succinctly. View Q1 as a means of launching into Q2, and Q3 an opportunity to elaborate on any relevant experience or transferable skill, that does not fit neatly into Q2. Try not to exceed 800 characters overall for Q1 & Q3.



UCAS STATEMENT: Q1 AND Q3



1) WHY DO YOU WANT TO STUDY THIS COURSE OR SUBJECT?

Consider using this prompt as a means to segue neatly into Q2, by demonstrating your interest, passion and/or understanding of the major. You can also include a brief explanation of your motivations for pursuing your desired course. **Keep this succinct, and avoid generalisations.**

It is also possible to utilise this to raise an example of a book/concept that got you fascinated with the discipline. This enables a neat slide into Q2 as well.

For instance:

- What do you understand about the discipline? If you had to encapsulate it succinctly in 1-2 lines? E.g., *To me, Computer Science is about...?*
- What sparked your interest in this field, and what made you more interested in it? Any specific event/experience/book etc?
- Your motivation for pursuing this major?

If your course is interdisciplinary, it's possible to highlight succinctly in 1-2 lines what the relationship between the disciplines are, to you, or your understanding of why and how they intersect.

3) WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU DONE TO PREPARE OUTSIDE OF EDUCATION, AND WHY ARE THESE EXPERIENCES USEFUL?

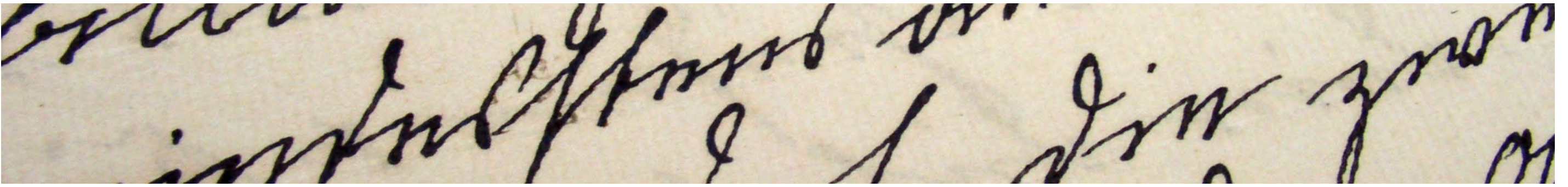
This question can be used to demonstrate your **suitability for the major**, beyond the academic and related skills you will talk about in Q2.

For instance:

- What are some **relevant** transferable skills you've gained from non-academic activities (which you did not raise in Q2: **avoid repetition**)
- What qualities of yourself did you develop that are essential to the course?
- **Contextualise** your skills and qualities to your chosen course.

Tip: this is where internships, CCA and such activities (caveat: which are not utilised in Q2 for academic analysis) can be raised, to highlight relevant skills that are necessary in the study or practice of your major. E.g., Applicants considering Medicine can highlight soft skills learnt in this question. Those looking at Law/PPE can raise internships/volunteering experiences here.

UCAS STATEMENT: Q2



2) HOW HAVE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AND STUDIES HELPED YOU TO PREPARE FOR THIS COURSE OR SUBJECT?

The bulk of your character count is focused on this (up to 3,300 characters).

To do:

- Demonstrate your **understanding of, and aptitude** to study your chosen course.
- Consider: from Sec 3 to now, what are the activities and experiences you have participated in, that are **relevant** to your desired major?
- In general, 3-5 activities are sufficient--avoid spamming or overgeneralisation. Depth of analysis is preferable to glance-overs and glosses.
- From the activities you've chosen: it is a three-step process of analysis. For each activity/experience:

a) Highlight a **specific academic concept/theory/model learnt**. Alternatively, a key tension/issue that can be discussed.

b) **Analyse this**. E.g., what is so important about the concept raised? How does it affect the field, or real-world impact? Or: Does it expose some key tension or limitation in conventional theory or perhaps is limited/instrumental in real world application? Why so?

c) **Pull out into a further insight, if possible**. E.g., after your analysis: Is the concept applicable in one scenario but not another? Why? Or: Any further implications thus on the field? Or broader insight you have gained into the discipline as a whole, or in particular niche areas?

HEO'S COUNSEL:

Don't be afraid to go deep into academic analysis and explication. The sharper and clearer, the better. Please balance this however. Write to the level you are capable of explaining in an interview.

Given how academically specific the statement is, it is wise go for majors with commonality. E.g., it is fine to have 5 choices that sound like two PPE courses, two Econs courses, and a final course of Politics & Economics. Your statement then focuses on Economics, weaving in threads of Politics and Philosophy where relevant. Avoid however, choosing majors that sound like Economics; Business. Likewise, selecting Law and Political Science will not work. The statement will lack academic specificity for both majors.

FINAL TIPS & REMINDERS



ON USE OF AI AND GENERATIVE SOFTWARE

- Read UCAS' official stance on use of AI software such as ChatGPT here
- As well, their statement on fraud

Be aware that some universities consider the use of AI to generate parts/all of a statement as cheating. This constitutes fraud.

HEO's counsel: In line with UCAS and the UK universities: avoid putting in all or even parts of your statement into any open-source model. What you feed becomes fodder for the machine. AI may be useful if you need to brainstorm some ideas, or a line, or if you need help in making your writing more succinct. Be careful however to **fact-check everything**. Above all: Only you write your own statement. What you write is your responsibility.



Time management

The deadlines for submission are:

- **Oxbridge/Med/related: Sunday, 4th Oct 2026, 2359h.**
- **Non-Oxbridge/non-Med: Wednesday, 6th Jan 2027, 2359h.**

- Start early on decision-making and statement-writing to keep on track.
- Be aware of timelines and to-dos. This includes registering for tests and approaching your CTs early.
- **For Y6s:** all offers are **conditional** based on actual A-Levels. Thus, consider well what you can take on. It is **not necessary** to apply to Oxbridge/overseas Medicine, if you find the A-Levels heavy-going as things stand. Do things healthfully please.

All the best and brightest to all of you,

HEO