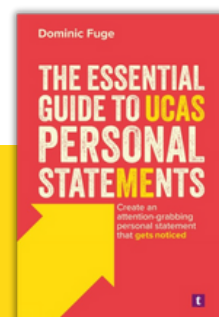


Master the new 3-part UCAS personal statement!

Taken from Dominic Fuge's *The Essential Guide to UCAS Personal Statements*, this resource demonstrates how to master each section of the new three-part UCAS personal statement. Drawing on insights from admissions tutors, professors, postgraduate and postdoctoral students, as well as senior members of university admissions teams, Dominic combines his research with years of experience helping students secure competitive university places. This example, complete with his expert commentary, shows how your students can craft an outstanding personal statement. It is one of six included in the book and the first ever set of examples available in the new three-part format.

Learn more about crafting an exceptional personal statement that stands out from the crowd in **The Essential Guide to UCAS Personal Statements**.



The personal statement

Question 1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Being raised in Bangkok's gold trade, my curiosity in Economics grew. Through my parents' gold shop I pondered gold's high commodity value. Growing up in the shop, I surveyed customers' behaviour and the nature of the business. I questioned gold's distinctive characteristics of rarity, durability, cultural significance, and economic utility. I soon realised its investment appeal as a liquid entity and something able to withstand inflation and recession.

With my interest in the financial world, I questioned the past importance of gold. I examined the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. I sought to understand how the Financial Crisis could have been prevented, creating a timeline of gold; I noticed the countries facing the worst of the crisis all lacked gold reserves. Historically, physical gold had little credit risk and was an asset outperforming others. Hypothetically, if these Asian countries reserved gold rather than foreign currencies, the aftermath perhaps could be less critical. I further researched this cataclysm, reading articles from the Economist and a paper entitled "Thailand's Monetary Policy Since the 1997 Crisis" by Nakornthob, and never thought that when the Thai government floated the Baht it would cause a chain reaction triggering the region's downfall.

My rumination of such world crises led me to read Taleb's "The Black Swan". A black swan event being one of rarity, extreme impact, and retrospective predictability. Taleb argued that many current models are outdated and lack robustness to predict such events, particularly with his explanation of survivorship bias through Wald's American aircraft armour anecdote. I believe tackling and preventing economic turmoil should come with precautions. Global issues cannot be solved using past solutions. Regardless of how similar an event is historically, we humans typically ignore little details and are careless to reach conclusions, as evidenced in duplicable situations like the "Dot-Com" Bubble.

From a childhood interest to a fundamental part of my current studies, Economics illustrates and solves society's greatest challenges. I see Economics as a pathway to my ambition of investment banking.

Characters: 2180

Question 2: How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

A Level Physics taught me to think logically in a process-driven way, undertaking Isaac Physics challenges and receiving a Gold in the Physics Olympiad. My team also won the Space Design Competition, where I calculated the costs of production of a new space settlement and most efficient resource allocation, linking to my Economics interest. Maths allowed me to refine my abstract reasoning skills, and I achieved a Silver in the UKMT Senior Challenge. Prior to my A Levels, I also maintained a keen interest in these subjects, earning a gold and “Best in School” in the UKMT Junior Challenge 2 years in a row. I also was awarded Gold awards yearly in the PAMA mental maths competitions, illustrating my ability to solve problems quickly.

Partaking in the NCH London Essay Competition 2025 I received “Highly Commended”. The task was to analyse possible impacts of Russian economic sanctions. I researched data and views from various sites and employed A-Level Economics knowledge to examine impacts across these regions: South America, Europe, Asia, and Russia. I argued that Europe was most likely to see the worst impacts, given their overdependence on Russian gas and that many countries are part of the EU tradebloc which condone Russia’s actions, whilst alternative nations remain more neutral. This experience taught me about citing and enhanced my analytical skills.

Characters: 1374

Question 3: What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

I enjoy language learning, currently practicing Mandarin, reaching HSK 3 level, a skill particularly useful in a globalised world where economics knows no bounds. I am a player for my local club's football team, earning the sportsmanship award. Moreover, I enjoy music, improvising songs on the piano, whilst also teaching myself the guitar. This shows my holistic development and willingness to contribute to all aspects of university life.

Characters: 441

Total characters: 3995

The commentary

Question 1

Immediately, from the outset, we get a snippet of the personal background of the applicant – someone exposed to the gold trade in Bangkok through the family business. This allows the reader to connect with the applicant and provides a unique context to remember this personal statement and set it apart from others. The applicant identified the commodity of gold as a particular area of interest and turned this into a running theme throughout the piece. While it is not always essential to have a specific topic running throughout the personal statement, doing so in an effective way can be an interesting method of providing a unique piece of writing. I have seen other running themes in the past, such as a focus on the superhero Iron Man for an Engineering personal statement (which was successful). The key is that, if students do decide to go down this path, they must ensure that the personal statement is still varied in terms of super-curricular activities, and the theme can be referred to throughout, but there has to be a balance to avoid making this theme too overpowering. The applicant has done well to find a great balance here of discussing gold while also bringing in a plethora of relevant experiences and knowledge to supplement.

What's also clear is that this is a personal statement aimed at Economics. A good technique is to mention the specific course early within the introductory paragraph. This helps the reader know that you are passionate and have relevant experiences directed to a specific course that is offered at the university. There is also, in the introduction, the inclusion of relevant key terminology ('liquid entity'; 'inflation and recession'). This helps to build and maintain an overall academic overtone. (As well as demonstrating your knowledge.)

Moving on to the second paragraph, we can see a great example of a setup sentence starter: 'With my interest in the financial world . . .' This is an extremely vivid way to showcase a sense of subject passion and curiosity – overtly highlighting an interest from the beginning. Demonstrating knowledge of the course, we can see some inclusion of relevant information, such as in this example, the use of a case study (the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis).

Question 1 continued

While trying to avoid being too cliché, consider identifying a monumental moment/theory/theorist to keep the reader not only entertained by eagerly waiting to read more about your reflection or critical analysis of the topic but also nodding along under the view of considering the applicant as someone who has extensively studied the university course they're applying for. Another method to signify extensive studying and an early mastery of your course is to create an opportunity of being able to interject a sentence or two containing objective information relevant to the course. We can see an example of this when the applicant wrote: 'Historically, physical gold had little credit risk and was an asset outperforming others.' This clear, concise and possibly even authoritative snippet of information is a subtle but powerful way of amplifying the impression that you have read around the field. In other words, while you have not yet been to university, you still possess some background knowledge and thus the ability to contribute in seminar/lecture theatre discussions.

Finally, as mentioned in the commentary I gave on personal statement example 2, the icing on the cake can come in the form of a soundbite. While on occasion they can be cliché, such comments can also be unique and thought-provoking. This is probably one of the very few (if not the only) moments where I would consider being somewhat cliché as acceptable. Have you been able to already identify the soundbite? Here it is: 'Global issues cannot be solved using past solutions.' Very nice. It is also rather nice – not essential, but worth considering – to end Question 1 with a short mini-conclusion. It's almost like a continuation from the introduction, completing the missing part with a rounding off of why this has to be the course to study at university. It helps to establish a succinct and coherent structure.

Question 2

At first glance, on the surface level, physics may not be the first subject that comes to mind when considering preparation for undertaking a degree in Economics. Nevertheless, the applicant has done very well to change minds and, moreover, very effectively demonstrate the transferable benefits. Namely, these benefits are identified as enabling one to ‘ . . . think logically in a process-driven way . . . ’ In addition, mentioning a subject is a perfect chance to also embed some related awards and achievements. In this case, the award is an impressive Gold in the Physics Olympiad. Again, the Space Design Competition may not innately be a concrete demonstration of preparedness for Economics, but yet again the applicant was able to identify extremely tangible experiences. Here, the applicant wrote about calculating costs and resource allocation. This shows the reader that no matter the subject, the applicant can excel (e.g. the Gold Award) and also find ways to bring this back to the main course passion – in this case, Economics.

Mathematics is perhaps an easier subject to link with Economics. The applicant, again, rather skilfully, does not just list or describe what was learned at school for Mathematics but uses this question as a platform to best engage in some self-marketing – detailing relevant academic competitions. Depending on your own experiences, the self-marketing does not have to necessarily contain academic competitions. The linking, in fact, could be any relevant super-curricular activity that fits in well. As we see at the end of this paragraph, the applicant went one step further to actually identify a specific skill obtained through engagement with their school subject: ‘ . . . illustrating my ability to solve problems quickly’. Consider which skills and qualities you would like to tease out as you also engage in some reflection and self-marketing!

As we can see here, as well as in other examples, Question 2 does not just have to contain classroom subjects. For instance, the applicant referred to participating in an essay competition and then linked A level Economics before sharing a critical analysis of the essay topic at hand.

Question 2 continued

While a personal statement is not an academic essay as such, do not feel that you cannot incorporate one or two evaluative points which have the effect of reinforcing the message to the reader that you have engaged in a large amount of research which has relevance for your chosen course. If you make some academic reflections, about current affairs, for instance, this is a wonderful way to render your personal statement not just an informative but also an entertaining read for the admissions tutor.

Question 3

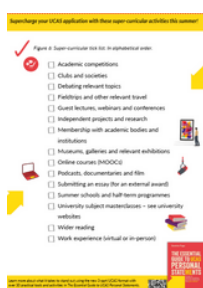
This question looks for evidence of an applicant's character and engagement with interesting, often non-academic activities, rendering him or her into a rounded candidate. In a relatively small number of characters, less than 500, the applicant was successful in showcasing three activities (language learning, sports and music). Moreover, there was not just a listing and brief description, but a very effective use of words to engage in some self-marketing. What was particularly effective was the way the applicant brought this back to the university degree (Economics), even though this was not necessarily about academic pursuits. (An impressive way to clearly show the reader that you are passionate about the course you're applying to.) Football, in this example, led to a tangible outcome of earning a sportsmanship award, and music offered a chance to highlight dedication, motivation and independence – being self-taught on the guitar! The final sentence was particularly effective – while at times being subtle is also effective and we should see some of that, also don't hold back on being explicit. Make the job easy for the reader to know that you have plenty of desirable attributes rather than them having to tease this out. The final sentence was direct: 'This shows my holistic development and willingness to contribute to all aspects of university life.'

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