

# **Review of 60 Successful Personal Statements for UCAS Application**

**With introduction and comments by Guy Nobes and Gavin Nobes**

A few weeks ago I had an interesting experience. I had two students applying for Veterinary Science. One was a mature student who worked in an animal sanctuary full-time, the other was an A level student. Both had high academic qualifications but by very different routes. The mature student had written a statement and wanted my opinion on how to improve. The A level student came with a few thoughts. One was surprisingly under confident about getting in, for the other it was just the next logical step. One saw the difference between getting a much longed for place as making every part of the application the very best it could be. The other thought the personal statement was more of an add on. One knew the odds of getting in, the other didn't. I know which one despite the odds will get in.

The place of the personal statement within the UCAS application system has never been more significant. Admissions staff are faced with increasing academic results and reduced places. Competition for the best places at the most well regarded institutions will only intensify as graduate employability becomes the key issue particularly as tuition fees are now at all time high. Differentiation between students comes from predicted grades, references which are now no longer confidential and the personal statement. The personal statement is the only place where a 'feel' for the student and particularly their enthusiasm for the prospective degree course can be ascertained.

Too often I see advanced level students who see the personal statement just as right of passage, something they can quickly put together in an hour study period. Understanding the importance of delivering a personal statement as a reflection of what they have to offer in this highly competitive environment eludes many. It isn't just about getting the spelling and grammar right, it is more about them understanding what needs to be demonstrated explicitly and planning the statement in a way that sells them academically and personally. You can't quantify enthusiasm or vocational experience in a grade but on a personal statement it screams out to you if it isn't there. Getting it right means more offers and a greater choice of institutions available.

60 Successful Personal Statements provides clear direction and inspiration to any student or tutor. It demystifies what a personal statement must include, and what admissions tutors want to see. This latest edition follows the previous 40 Successful Personal Statements which became a seasoned favourite for students, advisers and teachers. The book offers more statements covering an impressive range of academic subjects. It covers some of the most popular subjects and includes statements from students who have got into a wide range of institutions.

It retains the much respected first chapter, which has been updated. This chapter is a gem as it succinctly and efficiently goes through planning the statement, what should be in the first 60% and what should be in the rest. It covers how to open and close the

statement, key skills and qualities that need to be shown in the statement, as well as what to avoid. The ten golden rules keep the mind focused on what really makes a difference. The most valuable part of all though is the comparison of two statements showing which one is better than the other and why. From this the Platinum rule is explained which is for students to show rather than tell their interest in the subject, and what they have to offer. This is the essential aspect for students to truly understand, and to make their personal statement outstanding.

The rest of the book goes through real life examples of personal statements according to course subject title. Joint subject choice is also covered which is helpful for example in languages, French combined with Spanish, Law and International Politics. There is critique throughout each statement provided by a series of question marks which highlight strengths and weaknesses of the statement. This allows the reader to be fully engaged and reflect on what works best. At the bottom of each statement is the thumbs up sign with a list of institutions listed that the student got offers from. At the back of the book there is a handy subject index which allows the reader to cross reference a number of statements so the reader can dip and pick by subject mention.

Out of all my careers books this is one of the most used. I always refer to it when helping students to get the very best from their UCAS personal statement. It is an invaluable guide to all higher education applicants, advisers and tutors. It provides something different from other guides. It doesn't just tell you the standard to aim for, how to plan and execute an exceptional personal statement, it shows you.

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