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# Understanding the University Application Cycle

## *Session 2: Writing a Personal Statement*

### *Reading 1: Do's when writing a Personal Statement*

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#### Making a personal statement 'personal'

Personal statements must be 'personal'. Everything in a personal statement should come straight from the student and should reflect their experiences and enthusiasm. While it may be tempting to give your students opening lines and phrases, it is better to ask them questions to get them thinking instead. Ask them why they want to attend university and what it is about the subject that makes them want to study it further. Once they have thought of these reasons informally, they can start to formulate their reasons into coherent, formal sentences. It is also important to encourage your students to draw on meaningful, personal experiences that may have shaped their enthusiasm. For example, perhaps they travelled or worked in an inspiring place, or perhaps they experienced something significant in a workplace setting? While keeping it personal makes it unique, it is important to remember that everything they include should be relevant for what they're applying to study.

#### Editing

Your students will get tired of reading the same text repeatedly, but it is important that they read their personal statement numerous times to make sure that it makes sense and flows nicely. You should encourage your students to read their work aloud to hear whether their writing makes sense. It is also important to remind your students about the importance of spelling and grammar. It is worth reviewing basic punctuation with students to help them get their message across clearly.

## Being concise and to the point

While it is important that your students make their personal statements detailed, they also have a limit of 4,000 characters. It is therefore important for you to encourage your students to only include what is relevant and important.

Admission tutors will read many personal statements which can get tiring. A personal statement containing a lot of irrelevant information is not likely to impress. One method to help students remain concise is to follow a Point Evidence Explanation (PEE) structure. With this format, your student would make a point about the skill or quality they attained, provide evidence of this skill and then explain how this will help them at university.