

# Personal Statement Examples

# Academic robots need not apply

*A well-written personal statement singles out the most promising students from the crowd. How they are presented is vital, says Matthew Holehouse*

If you are applying to university this autumn, welcome to the race. Competition for places at the top institutions is tougher than ever. Bristol history department had 1,912 applications for 100 places last year; 2,000 students applied for 200 places on Durham's law course; and, every year, Cambridge rejects around 5,000 candidates who will go on to get three A grades at A-level.

Getting in, then, depends on standing out. Most applicants to many courses have similar predicted grades. Their teachers' references don't differ that much and, anyway, are treated with a degree of scepticism. So there is relatively little opportunity for tutors to discriminate between applicants.

That is what makes the personal statement on the Ucas form so important. By offering a glimpse of what the student is really like, the personal statement enables tutors to identify those best suited for their course – or, in the case of Oxbridge and most medical and many arts courses, decide who merits an interview. No matter how good your GCSEs and AS-levels are, if you mess up your 47 lines you'll be lucky to get a place on the course you want.

So what should you write? "Personal statement" is something of a misnomer. It is not an invitation to tell your life story but rather to prove to tutors that you want to study their subject. Universities do want "interesting" people but by that they mean those who are academically interesting and will be stimulating to teach, rather than good drinking mates.

Your first paragraph should set out why you want to study your subject. Don't fall back on "I have been interested since a young age" or "I find it" followed by a number of synonyms for fascinating. Instead, think carefully about the reasons behind your interest. What role does your subject play in society? Why is it more important than any other? Your aim should be to remind the tutors why they get up in the morning and to convince them that you feel the same way.

Use your second paragraph to concentrate on specific areas of your subject. This is where the difference

thought. Which areas are you especially interested in and why do they matter? You should be a little bold and offer some considered interpretations and views.

A good English candidate might write: "I am interested in the Gothic movement and enjoyed reading Shelley's *Frankenstein*." But a better one would say: "What interests me about Gothic literature is how it reveals the new preoccupations of the period. I read *Frankenstein* and was struck by the uncertainty and fear with which Shelley approaches scientific ideas." The important thing is to demonstrate that you can articulate ideas of your own.

Your statement will be hugely strengthened if you can provide evidence of academic curiosity and commitment to your subject. Here's

It is not an invitation to tell your life story, rather to prove that you want to study their subject

where some extra work over the summer holiday comes in. Use your fourth paragraph to discuss any books, plays, films, magazine articles or exhibitions that you have enjoyed that relate to your subject, again explaining what you thought interesting or unusual.

Don't assume that you ought to consume terribly advanced works; tutors probably aren't that interested in candidates who claim to have read *Das Kapital*. Look out for any relevant debates going on: the use of Herceptin for a medicine candidate, for example, or a recent landmark trial for law. However, make sure you can offer a degree of insight, rather than simply dropping names.

Use the last quarter to talk about your extra-curricular activities, such as sport, music or a part-time job. However

will not really care whether you were Sainsbury's worker of the month. It is a mistake to offer judgments about yourself. Stating that playing cricket for the school "shows that I am excellent at organising my time and working in a team" isn't helpful. Achievements should speak for themselves and tutors would much rather be left to make their own conclusions.

The final paragraph is also a good opportunity to balance what you've done with what you are going to do. If you are applying with a gap year, explain your plans, and show how they are relevant to your chosen course. Work experience, especially for vocational subjects such as medicine, management or law, can really boost an application. If you have a career in mind, showing how that relates to your degree – in my case, a sentence on the relationship between history and journalism – is a good way to conclude your statement.

Getting the language right is difficult. While it must be written in formal prose, this does not mean dredging the dictionary for impressive words. Imitate the way a newspaper article is written: precise, short sentences using everyday language that are easy to read at speed. Read your statement aloud. Does it sound like your natural speech? If not, simplify the language, cut down your sentences to their essentials, and put the saved words to better use.

Tutors will have several hundred applications to sift through and will thank you for making their job easier. Make sure you've written in paragraphs; the breaks in the text will help emphasise your points. Poor spelling and grammar are a real turn-off, so make sure yours are perfect. Ask many different people to read your statement critically and listen to their feedback.

While you should be bold in offering a considered viewpoint, there's little to be gained by being controversial or unconventional. Sometimes, though, applicants can pull off something special. One Oxford don told an open-day audience that the best personal statement he had ever read opened with: "My parents both took history degrees and ruined my holidays by dragging me round castles. One day I wish to do the same to my own children."

## Aamer Shaikh – Computer Science – Personal Statement

Engineering has always challenged the limitations of human innovation and creation. The intricacies of mathematics and the logic behind some of these great innovations have always been aspects which drive my desire to understand the mechanics and methods behind them.

Moreover, today's world is the era of computing technology, from the creation of the first electronic digital computer by John Atanasoff to the creation of 'Java', the most widespread programming language constructed. The foundations of today's technology are built upon a growing application of computer science. I am truly fascinated by the questions asked and accomplishments associated with computer science and believe it is a field where the door to opportunity and further success is only just opening.

I am surrounded by a family of engineers, who have grown and expanded into other career branches, exemplifying the versatility of skills that can be acquired in this field.

Hopefully, after establishing a background in computer science, I may diversify into other professional fields such as financial engineering or computer-based modeling. The skills acquired studying computer science will take other areas of study to whole new levels, expanding my career opportunities.

My decision to pursue A levels in Mathematics, Further Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Economics will provide me with a solid foundation upon which I can further my studies into the field of computer science. My heightened interest for mathematics and computing led to research on the Turing test and Turing machines, as well as exploration into how a whole new language leads to an array of new possibilities. I am a very independent, hardworking individual who relishes a challenge. These are traits that I believe led to me to win 15 subject prizes over a range of 9 subjects, including the maths prize over the last two years and the very prestigious Dux Scholarum award this year for the most outstanding student of the year. Through my annual participation in the UK Maths Challenge, I have achieved 2 gold certificates, a "best in school" certificate and a merit in the Olympiad paper. This will only encourage me to work even harder to earn further success. I have always believed perseverance is a key to success, as every achievement begins with the decision to try.

Along with my enthusiasm to strive for academic excellence, I take a keen interest in sports. I am a passionate tennis player, playing for the last 11 years and have managed to ensure a junior local ranking in Bahrain. Furthermore, I am a competitive swimmer who has been swimming for the school team for the last seven years. Sport is a significant component in my life, and has helped me to become a far more well-rounded individual. Having participated twice in The Hague International Model United Nations, I have had the opportunity to interact with many different types of people, helping to develop my interpersonal and communication skills, as well as my problem-solving capabilities. Additionally, the role of Deputy Head boy at the school is a position requiring great maturity and responsibility and has allowed me to develop my team-working skills and to make decisions which cater to the needs of the school community; it is a role that has helped to make me a much more assertive, yet caring character.

With my strong inclination towards mathematics, along with a determined character and practicality in solving issues, I believe I encompass the qualities necessary to tackle the complexities of modern day problems and compute solutions beneficial for the evolving world we live in. As this world progresses, the greatest advancements in science can only be generated from the most audacious minds.

*Permission has been given by the student on 01.07.09 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*

## Suzanna Khoshabi – Law – Personal Statement

I have come to believe there is no such thing as a straight answer. Every fact can be questioned or challenged, and the world to me appears to be blurred by conflicting opinions, motives and beliefs. With this in mind I find it remarkable that laws are able to exist, and moreover be upheld. According to the law you are, ultimately, innocent or guilty. Despite factors such as interpretation and circumstance the law requires you to reach a conclusion. This ultimately is what attracts me to law; this balance of fact and uncertainty.

Growing up in the Middle East has exposed me to a variety of legislative issues. Bahrain is a particularly ambivalent country, with laws influenced by both Islamic and Western culture. These sometimes incompatible customs have inevitably at times lead to political and social conflict. This has made me aware of how much laws affect people's lives, be it positively or negatively. Participating in a number of Model United Nations conferences increased this awareness. A forum in The Hague focused my interest on Human Rights Law; the controversial and delicate issues discussed fascinated me, and having to argue a stance that wasn't necessarily my own was a skill I am sure will be useful in a career in law.

My chosen A Level subjects have also drawn my attention to the significance of laws in society; studying Bolshevik Russia in history gave way to heated class debates over political theory, and forced me to question and form my own opinions on, the credibility of information and sources. Combining History with English Literature has honed my written and oral communication skills, and ability to structure a coherent argument. Additionally, I feel that working towards my AS Critical Thinking exam helped develop my analytical abilities. I have also found A Level Art to be relevant and stimulating to my academic life: tenacity, creativity, and confidence are all traits I have gained from it. Most importantly, art has acted as an outlet for me to explore complex issues. The intense research and workloads required were initially a challenge, however it was one I overcame and last year I won my school's Outstanding Exhibition Prize for my AS project.

I am also a keen musician. Piano lessons have been a weekly event in my life since I was 7, and this year I plan to sit my Concert Performance Diploma exam. Competing in school Music Festivals and regional competitions such as Young Musicians of the Gulf has definitely helped me overcome any inhibitions I had of performing to large audiences. I am also a dedicated runner and for the last 6 years have been on the school team for the Marathon Relay, Bahrain's largest annual charity event. I have also assumed roles of mediation and leadership whilst at school, as an elected Form Representative every year until Sixth Form.

A summer internship at United Gulf Bank taught me much about office etiquette, as well as a brief lesson on business and finance. Volunteering with the Bahrain Migrant Worker's Protection Society has also educated me; whilst distributing donated food in labour camps I was shocked to see the dire conditions of their accommodation. Such hardship is something I will always find disturbing.

I genuinely believe I am suited to and capable of studying law: I'm able to think critically, creatively and independently, and want to study a course that will put these abilities to use. I know that with perseverance and my enthusiasm for the subject, law is a field I can excel in.

*Permission has been given by the student on 01.07.09 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*

## Madeleine Donaldson – English – Personal Statement

Some say that different languages have their own distinct personalities; if this is the case, English is certainly an eccentric character. As a language that borrows from French, Latin and Spanish, to name just a few, it is no wonder that English holds such a fascination as a field of study. As a student studying in the Middle East I find it amusing to find yet another English word with Arabic roots, a testament to the fact that despite being a language so firmly established, it is constantly evolving, with words becoming superseded and new additions being made as time moves on.

In an era where the ability to communicate has never been simpler it is ironic that so many miscommunications are occurring, and as such a confident command in English in both the written and verbal sense is imperative, skills which an English degree will undoubtedly provide. Over the years I have strived to perfect my writing skills, most notably as a member of the press corps in Bahrain's MUN conference and as the recipient of the school's English Literature Prize, and hope to sharpen them further. However, as a person so enamoured with the English language, I find that my wish to study it at university level is fuelled by stronger desires.

It pains me to hear sceptics maliciously belittling literature by claiming that it does not play an active role in the world. Indeed, George Orwell's writing is evidence that even in times when our most basic freedoms are taken away from us, our ideas are indestructible. As a history enthusiast I was awestruck by 'Animal Farm', as the realisation that it was written as a political allegory denoting Communism gave the book's judgments more meaning. Through the use of this clever linguistic device, Orwell was able to put across the poignancy that Communism was able to infiltrate the minds of the unsuspecting by masquerading as something seemingly simplistic.

However, as well as being a vehicle for the exposure of darker elements of society, literature can also be a source of basic emotional understanding. Upon reading W.H. Auden's poem 'September 1, 1939' I was struck by the concept of 'literature as a response to crisis.' The poem written about Hitler's invasion of Poland in World War II showed startling parallels to the tragedy of 9/11, and so was a point of reflection for many grieving Americans. The idea that people could draw such hope from a poem which promised an 'affirming flame' was particularly enlightening, and urged me to reflect on how literature can really make a difference in peoples' lives.

Indeed, my voluntary work in charity events hosted by the American Women's Association in Bahrain helped me revisit this concept. Working alongside children with disabilities helped me develop my interpersonal skills, but more importantly it allowed me to appreciate the value of literature, as despite many of the children being unable to see or hear, the ability to enjoy a book was not something that could be taken away from them.

As a person with varied heritage, I find it comforting that my first and only language is one that is like me in many ways. Much like English I have my eccentricities, the little parts of my personality which have been influenced by my experiences, as well as the same ambition to adapt for what the future holds. Studying English in the very country where it flourished would be a dream for anyone interested in the subject, but in my case I want it to become a reality.

*Permission has been given by the student on 01.07.09 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*

### Sam Young – Math / Physics – Personal Statement

From investigating resonance in the kitchen sink to mulling over the fluid dynamics of school corridors, I've always seen the world through the eyes of physics. From an early age I questioned the explanations I was given, never satisfied with just accepting something as true. Many a childhood afternoon was spent with my dad exploring the simplifications of what I had been taught, and trying to develop a better model.

Whilst I have always loved Physics, there were two discoveries that truly excited me. The first of these was the discovery of relativity and the speed of light (through Russell Stannard's "The Time and Space of Uncle Albert"). I still remember re-reading the book twice and struggling to grasp the consequences of his Gedanken experiments. The second major event was discovering the exciting life of Richard Feynman, through his autobiographies. His creative, unusual approach to Physics fascinated me, and led me into some of the most fundamental areas of Physics. His tantalising tasters of Quantum Physics led me to purchase my first Physics textbook The New Quantum Universe which, though I didn't understand it all at the time, served to open my eyes to the joys of real Physics.

Mathematics also has much to offer in the way of beauty. I was fascinated to read of the pattern behind the prime numbers in "The Music of Primes", a book which gave me a glimpse of the pleasure that can be found in Mathematics. I have personally always enjoyed interesting Maths, and have met with considerable success in the UKMT Maths Challenge (3 Golds), the Olympiad (Merit), IGCSE Additional Mathematics (A\*) and AEA Mathematics (Merit). I enjoy the challenge of tackling non-standard problems as they require that one try to understand the underlying patterns behind the problem in order to construct and evaluate possible routes to a solution. This is useful for ordinary exams as well; I achieved full UMS in all my AS Physics units, which earned me the Physics Prize for Outstanding Achievement last year.

However, Maths and Physics are not the only subjects I succeed in. I have won 16 academic prizes in 8 different subjects over the past 6 years, gained full marks in coursework and exams in several subjects, and even achieved one of the 5th highest scores in the UK in my Geography GCSE. This success is the result, not just of an agile mind, but also a conscientious, disciplined approach to study.

Hard work and the ability to quickly develop and evaluate models have allowed me to thrive in the forum of Model United Nations (MUN), where quickly developing effective solutions is key. I thoroughly enjoyed the debating, quick thinking and leadership involved in my roles as Head of Delegation to The Hague International MUN and Chairperson at Bahrain MUN. My problem-solving skills have also been useful as Deputy Head Boy, where reshaping the organisational structure for increased efficiency has been a major focus this year (as well as organising events and running the Prefect team). Independent thinking and initiative characterise much of what I do, from Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award, to starting and running a private football coaching program for young children. In everything that I do, I constantly strive to understand the situation and develop effective solutions to the problems I encounter.

From the books I read to the jokes I make, the principals and methods of physics resonate across the surface of my life. And as my life flows its course, I hope to emerge finally with a greater understanding of the universe we live in.

*Permission has been given by the student on 01.07.09 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*

## Christine Simpson – Chemistry – Personal Statement

Chemistry is truly the central science because it is the foundation upon which our understanding of the world is built. From the oxygen balance of TNT to the Hydrogen ion Flagella of prokaryotes, nothing works without Chemistry.

I am the youngest student in my year group so when I took my Maths GCSE early I was two years younger than the average GCSE candidate. I went on to take the Additional Mathematics course and have recently completed my Maths A level. I also took an AS level in ICT in Year 11 rather than at GCSE level. I have a demanding A level timetable with five subjects but I am pleased I undertook this challenge because I genuinely enjoy learning. This pursuit of knowledge in many different areas has taught me the value of discovering for oneself the complexity behind the world we live in. Respiration, for example, used to be a simple chemical equation to me. Because of my education, I have come to know it as a fascinating metabolic pathway that relies upon REDOX reactions and potential differences across the membranes of mitochondria to make energy for countless processes in the human body.

I am rarely satisfied with the explanations given in my lessons and as a result I frequently refer to more advanced material. My Mum's university Anatomy and Physiology textbook helps me understand the underlying chemical reactions behind the processes I study in biology. I also found Open Course Ware: a comprehensive collection of recorded lectures available from MIT. I have made a habit of watching the Physics lectures by Professor Walter Lewin to expand upon my A level syllabus. I find that having a thorough mathematical knowledge of the laws of Physics really helps me to understand them. For example: rather than accepting that the period of an oscillation is independent of amplitude, I learnt how to prove it using differential equations from these lectures.

My role as Deputy Head Girl has given me experience in working as part of a development team within my school, a skill I feel will be particularly valuable for my future career in science. I am currently working towards my Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award and, similarly, the expedition element of this has taught me a lot about using each group member's strengths to make a successful team. I think it is important to analyse and revise the way we do things on a regular basis in all areas of life. At my church I noticed the inefficiency and environmental impact of producing new song sheets every week and so for the service section of my Duke of Edinburgh's Award I pioneered a technical team using my ICT skills. We now display song lyrics using slide show software and have a digital database of songs and music.

The fundamentals of Chemistry decide what happens in all living things and I believe that an animal testing alternative lies within Chemistry. It is my goal to improve animal welfare, and benefit scientific research, by working to develop methods of chemical testing that make use of Chemistry and computer modelling technology to replace animal research in medicine and industry.

Chemistry has taught me to question what I see and learn: to be content when not only do I know what happens but how and why too. It is through the combination of Biology and Chemistry that I can apply my understanding to the world around me; that I can see the big picture through the lens of a microscope."

*Permission has been given by the student on 01.07.09 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*

## Umer Wazir – Medicine – Personal Statement

My overwhelming desire to improve quality of life for other people coupled with my deep understanding of many aspects of Chemistry and Biology gives me the perfect grounding for the pursuit of a career as a medical professional.

My choice of A level subjects reflects my interest in the scientific method particularly Chemistry and Biology which have developed my skills particularly in hypothesis making, testing and analysis, which I believe is fundamental to studying medicine. Moreover, I have taken the initiative to study the 'microbiology and biotechnology' option of my Biology course in my free time, even though my school chose not to offer it, as I feel it will be beneficial to the MBBS course I'm eager to take up. My other interests include History, where I obtained the second highest mark in the world in the 2007 GCSE examinations, as well as receiving the History Prize this year. This contrasting subject allows me to divert my mind from the rigours of science: with relaxation as a result.

In order to gain further insight into the life of a doctor, I undertook a series of work experiences. The first of these was at the Whittington Hospital, London's Pathology department. Apart from administrative work, I gained useful insight into the diagnostic techniques used by clinicians such as fine needle aspirations, endoscopic biopsies and resection specimens of colonic and breast cancers. In addition, I also became aware of the strict Health and Safety regulations, as well as the importance of life and teamwork involved in the healthcare profession. Another experience was at the A&E department of the Bahrain Military Hospital. Being exposed to death in the many trauma cases I saw, gave me valuable insight into the everyday realities of hospital life. Moreover, the numerous emergency operations I observed provided me with proof that I am well equipped to deal with the sight of blood and flesh!

Having been 'born and bred' in London, I have travelled extensively and been subjected to many different cultures and traditions and this, with my trilingual background, enables me to efficiently communicate with many. Volunteering at a local care home for the past year has shown me the emotions both carers and the elderly go through. I discovered that my fellow volunteers and I had to personally talk to them to find any grievances they may have, as they are very unwilling to complain. Moreover, I have registered for a trip to Tanzania later this year, to build a school at a local village. I aim to gain a lot of experience there, particularly on the ground realities of AIDS and Malaria, which have plagued the continent in recent history.

One of my first experiences of leadership was during my Duke of Edinburgh's Award expedition in the Bahraini desert. One of my team members suffered a sprain to her ankle. As I held responsibility for first aid, I attended to her ankle whilst assigning jobs to other members of the team. The team's remarkable organisation showed me the importance of strong leadership to coordinate effective teamwork. These skills were further enhanced while I held the position of school prefect as well as being elected as my year's representative to the student council. I enjoy many types of sports, particularly cricket and rugby: I have played the latter with the Bahrain National Team on an international level on several occasions, where I proved to be an effective team player.

I've always had a sincere attitude in helping others; this was supplemented by a growing interest in science which led me to aspire to become a doctor. I later found myself tested time after time to the physical and emotional limits of a doctor during my various work experiences, which left me and my aspirations unshaken. I firmly believe that my enthusiasm in helping others, my skills in science combined with my vibrant and strong personality would be put to best use in this dynamic and rapidly changing profession.

## Charlotte Sherman – Languages – Personal Statement

At the age of seven my parents abandoned me in a "colonie de vacances" in the Tarn et Garonne. What could have been a traumatic experience in fact became a turning point in my life as I discovered I could communicate effectively with French speakers despite having limited linguistic resources. Since then, French has been an important part of my life and I have revisited this summer camp regularly and developed my knowledge of the language. Now, reasonably proficient, I would like to study French at university level so as to gain a deeper understanding of the language and literature of this remarkable language.

My motivation to study a Slavic language stems from my Polish heritage. Living in a multicultural society I have often found myself reflecting on my ethnicity. Being a third generation immigrant to the UK, I now realise that unless I take steps to connect with my heritage and learn the language of my forebears, part of me risks disappearing forever. As few universities offer Polish, I would alternatively like to study Russian due to its rich literary culture and its historic position as the dominant power in Eastern Europe.

I know that learning any new language ab-initio is a challenge; however, I have had experience doing so with Spanish, Arabic and German, with some success. Having started Spanish in year ten, I achieved 360/360 UMS in my GCSE. In years 7 to 9 I followed an extra curricular course certified by the University of Durham, School of Modern Languages in Arabic and Arab studies in which I gained merits and distinctions in all four skill areas. Due to some curriculum limitations I have sadly been unable to continue German or Arabic both of which I enjoyed. Also, I have had to enrol part-time at another school in order to continue Spanish to A-level.

My love of communicating has led me to involve myself in activities where I am in constant contact with a wide variety of people. I have been a keen rider since the age of five and have actively pursued this interest in France and Bahrain. My Duke of Edinburgh expedition groups have been made up of students from all over the world with whom I have worked towards achieving a common goal. Together we have biked through the deserts of Bahrain, climbed the Troodos Mountains and for our gold award we intend to go to Moshi in Tanzania. Before doing this, however, we plan to raise awareness of the extreme poverty in Africa by fundraising for a school in Moshi. Besides this, I am a keen musician. I play the piano (ABRSM grade 5) and I dabble in the clarinet and saxophone. Whilst music may seem like a solitary past-time, it has given me the opportunity to participate in the Young Musicians of the Gulf competition and join the school wind band which has been a rewarding privilege as well as a valuable lesson in team-work.

As I will only be seventeen when I finish my A levels, I would like to take a gap year. I have already been offered a job teaching French in a pre-school. I will also apply for an internship at the Gulf Daily News, the national newspaper of Bahrain. With the money I earn from these jobs I plan to travel to Poland and take an immersion course in Polish to familiarise myself with the culture and meet up with relatives.

My career interests lie in international journalism and I feel that knowledge of languages is essential for this. Although English dominates the global scene, I believe that it is only by being able to communicate with people in their own languages that we can shatter the glass curtain that exists between cultures.

*Permission has been given by the student on 01.07.09 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*

## Alex Brennan – Sports/Leisure – Personal Statement

A career in the sports and leisure field has been an ambition of mine for a long time. Throughout my life I have always shown a determination to succeed in any sport related activity. With the knowledge gained from GCSE and AS physical education I have a sound knowledge of both the practical and the theory side of sport. The theory aspect appeals to me greatly as it shows how an athlete must adapt and adjust to meet the demands of the environment and how to compete in a well-mannered way. This has aided me with the success that I have achieved in sport when competing.

At the beginning of my further education, I moved to the UK for one year due to family circumstances and whilst there I studied similar subjects to those I am currently taking. These were: leisure studies, BTEC sport and fitness and design technology. I feel the experience of learning a wider base of subjects has allowed me to gain a clearer understanding of sport and leisure. Further to my studies in Sports and Leisure, I feel my four years of experience in Design Technology have allowed me to acquire important study skills such as: portfolio management, meeting deadlines, dealing with client bases, organisation and time management skills.

My passion for physical education does not just remain in the classroom. I am also a keen individual within my local community. I have helped run a gymnastics class in a local sporting facility. This required me to teach basic gymnastic skills to children aged 6-12. I thoroughly enjoyed passing on my knowledge and skills to the younger gymnasts.

Whilst studying Leisure Studies I worked at a hotel to gain experience in the leisure industry. It required me to work in all sectors of the hotel and enabled me to gain a variety of skills. The position enabled me to display reliability and responsibility as I made sure I was always at work on time and carried out the duties set to an excellent standard. It also further improved my people skills.

During Year Ten, I took part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, whereby I was able to further develop the skills of self-confidence and self-reliance. Once completed, it gave me a sense of achievement and team work.

I have enjoyed playing rugby since the age of six and have always represented Bahrain; recently I have been selected to play for the adult 1st team. Moreover, I took this interest to the next level when I was selected to play for the Arabian Gulf U16s where I was able to play at an international level. Whilst living in the UK, I played for Derby U17s. My most enjoyable and proudest sporting achievement to date was when I represented Bahrain Rugby Club U19s in the Dubai Rugby 7s tournament. Additionally, I have competed in every school sports day and have always achieved medals in short distance running. I have also been an active member of the school swimming squad for eleven years and have taken part in swimming galas around the Arabian Gulf. Furthermore, I have played football, both in the school team and for pleasure.

From university I wish to gain specialist subject knowledge, which will be ideally suited to many career roles in areas such as sports facility management and sports development. Furthermore, university will enable me to enhance my social and communications skills which will be needed when undertaking a managerial role in later life.

*Permission has been given by the student on 01.07.09 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*

## Tala Fahoum – Finance, Accounting and Management

Only recently, the world of banking, finance and global capital markets has faced one of the biggest crises in a century, forcing venerable institutions such as Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch and AIG into an array of actions; ranging from filing for bankruptcy and mergers to government bail-outs. Locally, banks have curtailed lending; real estate prices are dropping, whilst media coverage is comprehensively given to this subject. Thus, despite living on the small island of Bahrain, I have witnessed the impact of this occurrence immediately and I am intrigued. The pervasiveness and interconnection of global financial systems is clear, and viewing this has confirmed my desire to partake in such a dynamic world by pursuing a course in Finance, Accounting and Management.

I believe my acquired experiences and skills both in and out of school have helped pave the way for my future and prepare me for what lies ahead in this field. English has allowed me to articulate my thoughts more coherently and improve my use of rhetoric, which is an asset in any business, as one's language and conduct is seen as a reflection of ability and is vital for communication. More relevantly, Mathematics provides me with a base for problem solving in real-world situations. My passion for this subject led me to a New England summer school in 2006 where I attained Calculus credits, an achievement which both increased my comprehension of the subject and allowed me to help others through tutoring. Taking History has sharpened my analytical skills, and as a speaker of both Arabic and English, I have come to reap the benefits of being bilingual. Working in a global market often demands a broader understanding of diverse backgrounds, thus, taking French A-Level has served to refine my linguistic skills, whilst summer courses in France allowed me to immerse myself in the French culture and further understand the language. Likewise, I feel an industrial placement would enrich my knowledge of Accounting and Finance, cementing the theories learnt in university through practice.

However, although academia is the main focus during university, a work-life balance is fundamental. I pride myself on my versatility; although I maintain focus in school, this doesn't take away from my social life, nor does it prevent me from participating in various activities. One in particular that has become a lifestyle for me is sport. I have been involved in netball, football, volleyball and basketball teams for the past five years, winning prizes in most and captaining the basketball and football teams. Despite being recreational, my input both as a team member and as a captain allowed me to develop key interpersonal skills which were further cemented by my roles as a coach for the younger girls' basketball team and a participant in the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

My enjoyment in the community service aspect of the Scheme spurred me to continue giving back to society regularly. I have taken a particular interest in the environment and actively use my role as prefect to expose its importance within our school, reflecting what I aspire to achieve in the future. As I have said, the world is facing a credit crunch crisis, something I initially viewed as largely the result of human avarice. However, an internship at White and Case, a law firm taught me much about the mechanics of the workplace and its organisation; during which time I found it both refreshing and relieving to discover that now, more than ever, successful organisations go beyond the aim of solely generating profit to also engaging with their societies, combining their business agenda with corporate social responsibility.

Former Secretary of Education Richard Riley estimates that the ten most in-demand jobs of 2010 will not have existed in 2004. In pursuing this course I hope to build solid foundations that will ultimately prepare me for the demands of work; whether it be in a job now available or one yet to be created.

*Permission has been given by the student on 01.07.09 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*

## Rohan Lucas – Economics – Personal Statement

Having lived in the Kingdom of Bahrain for over 15 years, I have been truly amazed by its financial growth and development into one of the major economic forces in the Middle East. I have also had a great interest in the areas of economics and finance since first being introduced to it during GCSE Economics. The dynamic nature of economics and finance related subjects is very refreshing in comparison to the other courses on offer. The subjects are challenging courses which I feel will greatly benefit me in the future.

My future aspirations are to enter the world of banking and finance which appeals greatly to me. I feel that my current A Levels of Economics, Physics and Mathematics as well as AS ICT equip me well for such a course as they are some of the more demanding subjects available. Such subjects not only prepare me academically but also define my determined mentality and belief in perseverance. A Level Mathematics and Physics have enhanced my problem solving skills whilst the Economics course has already given me insight to the financial world which I feel is extremely beneficial. The AS Level ICT course I undertook ensures I am aware and able to cope sufficiently with various technologies today.

During my time in Bahrain I have developed into a sociable and confident person. I have successfully completed the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award. This award showed me the importance of values such as teamwork, determination and responsibility and was a stern test of my resolve physically and mentally. Furthermore I have completed the Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program in 2006 which helped develop my social and public speaking skills. I also represented my school in the Trade Quest Challenge 2007/2008. The aim of this competition was to trade on the NYSE (New York Stock Exchange) and to make as much of a return as possible. It also involved presenting the school's performances to a panel of judges as well as to other competing schools. This course truly enhanced essential skills such as teamwork and also my public speaking skills but most importantly my knowledge and understanding of economics and finance as it required me to complete various tasks based around the subject, such as analysing the team stock portfolio and taking into account economic factors such as key interest rates and inflation.

Besides academics, sport plays an integral part in my life. I have represented the school football team right through from under 14 levels till now, senior level (under 19). I have also attended various sport clubs such as the Bahrain Rugby Football Club outside school. In addition, I have won various Bahrain Private School Sports League table tennis titles at junior and senior level. Team and individual sport is a vital part of my life as I find it extremely revitalising and a change from the virtually constant pressure of academics. It also helps build skills and attributes such as teamwork, determination and competitiveness which will greatly help me later on in life, at university and in my future career. Besides sport, I thoroughly enjoy other hobbies such as reading fictional books for example. I feel my passion for reading will aid me academically, in completing the challenging course I opt to study during university.

I feel going to university in the UK spells the beginning of a new adventure from which I will make new friends and learn many new things. I hope to go to university not only to achieve my dreams of entering the financial world, but also for an experience that will help me become a more independent, responsible and well rounded person.

*Permission has been given by the student on 01.07.09 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*

### Noor Zainal – Fine Art - Personal Statement-

There is no part of my life that is more intrinsic to who I am than my Art. It is a powerful tool for connecting with people, a way of expressing visions far beyond the capacity of words. I can communicate my ideas and opinions uninhibited by limitations. My curiosity to discover the world of art and design drives my ambition to embark on a course that allows me to explore my options. A Foundation Course in Art and Design exposing me to the full spectrum before having to decide on a specific pathway would be ideal.

I feel privileged to have been chosen to represent my school by producing an Art work for the Crown Prince of Bahrain, HRH Shaikh Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa in 2010. The following year, one of my artworks was presented to the British Ambassador of Bahrain. I am proud that based on the A-Level Art Exhibition, I was approached by a viewer who bought two of my pieces. It is rewarding to know that my work is so highly valued; that others feel the emotion I try to convey throughout my work.

At St. Christopher's, I have developed as a person becoming increasingly engaged in Art and Design, Technology. Each of my A-Level subjects has benefited me in their own unique way. Art has allowed me to unlock capabilities I never knew existed, resulting in a portfolio I am proud of comprised of a diverse range of themes and ideas. I researched numerous great Artists but Jenny Saville's work particularly captivated me. It screams out pain and raw emotion. She challenges stereotypical images of beauty that the media promotes in our society today and the negative representations and expectations of modern women. We are all bombarded with images of skeletal, undernourished models on magazine covers and are fooled into idolising them and have been sucked into a superficial world that believes anything else is not beautiful. Saville creates large-scale nude paintings of overweight women completely defying that convention. She is truly inspirational.

Within the Arabic A-Level lies my local culture which I treasure so much. Being bilingual, I feel blessed to be able to express myself in more than one language and comprehend different literatures, creeds and customs. Writing in Arabic has appealed to me because of its artistic nature. I incorporated Islamic Calligraphy in my Art work, merging text with photographs which I painted depicting certain aspects of Muslim Societies.

Maths has endlessly been used in Art. Leonardo Da Vinci uses the Golden Ratio when painting human figures and I explored the idea of Divine Proportion throughout my Art book. As my coursework progressed, I was compelled to take a close look at the lives, history, beauty and tradition of Japanese Geishas. It was distressing reading about their exploitative profession and how they purely existed to fulfill the pleasures of men.

Studying Design and Technology has made me realise its growing importance in our everyday lives. Generating initial ideas was my favourite aspect as I had the opportunity to make use of my artistry when having to demonstrate high quality drawings showing a range of sketching techniques.

Besides academia, I have always made time to participate in extra-curricular activities. I volunteered at the School Festive Fayre as well as a charity event to raise money for the disabled. One major highlight of my senior years involved a Community Service Trip to Thailand. During my 10 day stay there I learned a great deal about the lifestyle of the underprivileged Thai families who lived in Maekok village. I felt humbled by their courage and strength. It was an unforgettable experience that has helped shape the person I am today and the Art I long to produce. Recently, I was approached by the Art Department and asked to help produce a backdrop for St. Christopher's high profile theatrical production "Guys and Dolls" and I was delighted to be involved. I look forward to the opportunity to work on other similar projects in future.

"We are hard-wired for creativity".

*Permission has been given by the student on 14.05.12 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*

## Hanan Al Yousif – Psychology – Personal Statement

As a student of psychology, I find myself increasingly curious about the subject and enthusiastic at the prospect of undertaking a higher education in it. Being able to understand more of the complex mystery of what makes a human is exciting and encourages me to learn more each time I step into a psychology class.

Ultimately, my goal in studying Psychology at university would be to help people after I have earned my degree. My passion for psychology complements my innate desire to help people in distress. If I am able to help even one person at a time it could perhaps improve how they live their lives, changing behaviours for the better. I have always been told that I am an excellent listener and that I am very good at helping people solve their problems; as such I can make the most of my interests by continuing what I truly wish to study.

Academically, my Psychology A-Level has taught me many things, such as how to carry out experiments ethically and how to interpret studies accurately. Furthermore, studying Biology and Mathematics A-Levels and a Chemistry AS-Level has taught me how to conduct experiments in the laboratory and how to analyse numerical data, which helps me significantly in the statistical aspects of Psychology. Through these subjects I have gained a confidence in my practical and analytical skills, as well as developing my skills in time management. In Chemistry, as it is a crucial factor in successfully carrying out experiments.

While I thoroughly enjoy academic learning, I also participate in many extra-curricular activities. I have been swimming frequently from a young age, which led me to participate in various school swimming galas and competitions. Completing grades 1-4 of Violin has given me the ability to pay attention to detail but to also be a part of a team in orchestral settings. In my spare time my passion lies in art, and I have even participated in my own exhibition. Art has always been a significant influence in my life, and has led me to find innovative and creative solutions to any challenge I am faced with.

I enjoy helping those in need, as it enables me to participate in bettering a part of life for a group of people. One major example of my community service is when I participated in the Thailand community project that my school initiated. Our group was able to work as a team in order to assist a school near the northern border of Thailand, where the government had provided little support. We refurbished the school canteen to make their experience at school more hygienic, as well as teaching English to the children, using various techniques that were presented to us and a few that we had come up with ourselves. We had raised money through different events so that they could have more financial aid and further support in the form of school supplies. The reason I enjoyed this venture so much is because of the experience of being able to provide support for others.

Undertaking your course of Psychology will enable me to develop my expertise in the subject, therefore giving me valuable insight to base my future career on. I know that I will develop through my education, as an individual and student. Our experiences shape our decisions, and I have every confidence that this endeavor will be a positive one.

*Permission has been given by the student on 01.07.09 to use his/her UCAS Personal Statement as an example.*