



University of  
Nottingham

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

# Personal Statements

Post-16 Widening  
Participation & Outreach

Lynsey Johnston





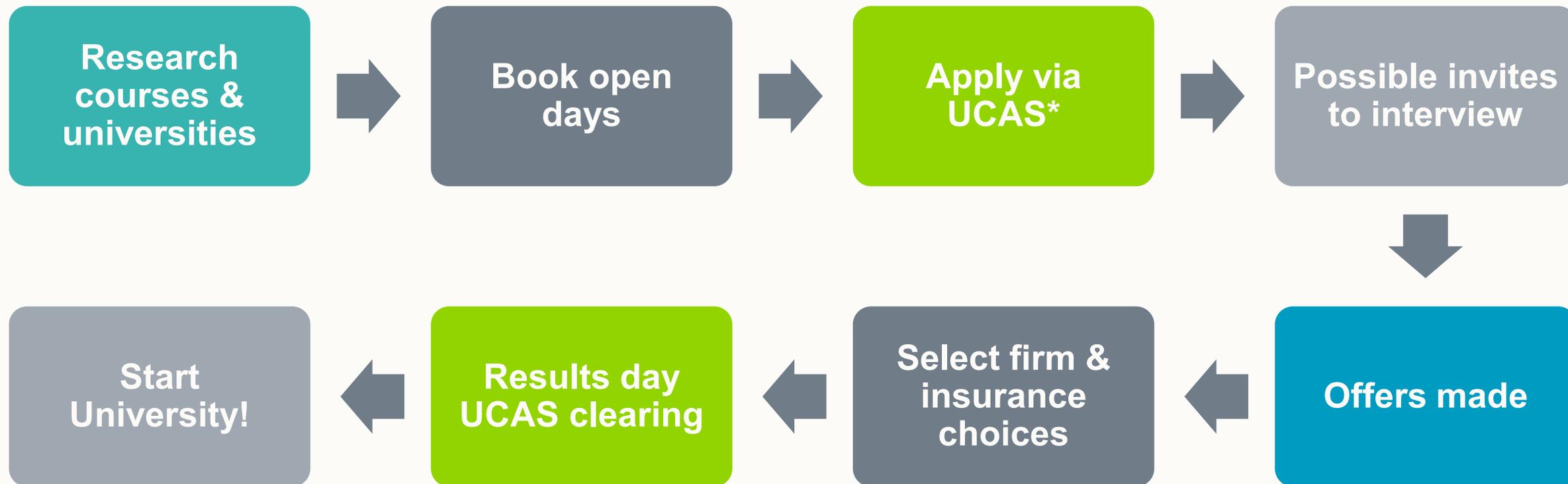
# Aims of the session

- Overview of the UCAS and selection process
- Explore how to demonstrate your skills and experiences
- Know what to include in a good personal statement





# Overview of UCAS cycle



\*you may be required to sit additional admissions tests for certain courses before submitting your UCAS form



**What do you already  
know?**



# How many personal statements can you submit?

**A**

One for each of my five choices

**B**

Only one for all five choices

**C**

Two, but only if applying for a joint honours course



**Universities might make your application unsuccessful based upon your personal statement?**

**A**

True

**B**

False



# What is the character limit of a personal statement?

**A**

4,000 characters

**B**

4,500 characters

**C**

6,000 characters



# Your statement may be flagged as plagiarised if...

## A

It has 40% similarity to another statement

## B

It has 35% similarity to another statement

## C

It has 30% similarity to another statement



# What is the most common way to open your personal statement?

**A**

I am applying for this course because...

**B**

From a young age I have been...

**C**

For as long as I can remember I have...



# The Purpose of a Personal Statement



# The Purpose

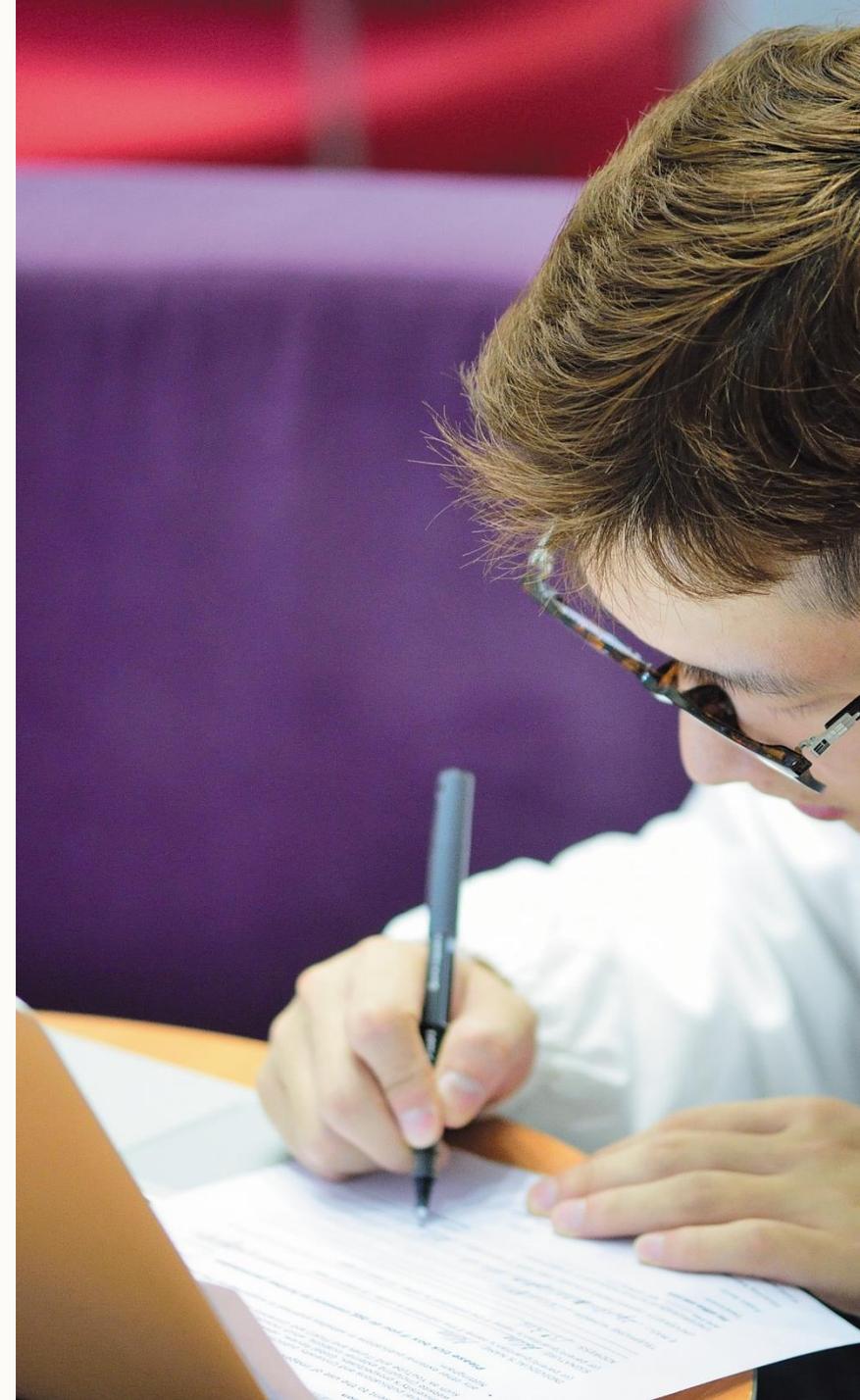
- All unis use them
- Personal development activity
- Read by admissions staff and/or academics





# Changes to Personal Statements

- Misleading media
- Format and structure has changed
- Develops invaluable skills





# What to demonstrate

- A genuine interest for the subject(s)
- Intellectual curiosity
- Engagement with the subject outside of the curriculum
- A well-rounded individual (extra/super-curriculars)





# Structure & content



# The Structure

Q1

- Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Q2

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

Q3

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

Minimum character limit: 350



# Q1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?



- What are your motivations for studying this course?
- Showcase your subject knowledge and insight
- Future plans – how does this course support that?
- Think outside the box!



# Tell us what you want to study...

By studying population predictions from different countries in the form of population pyramids and the demographic transition model, I was able to understand how population was going to change in different parts of the world and how this would affect the area they live in.



*Geography*



# Tell us what you want to study...

I particularly admire Louis Kahn's work - most notably the National Assembly in Dhaka, where he recreated a sense of ancient monumentality in a modern building. I wonder: How did he manage to give a physical structure a spiritual quality?



*Architecture*



# 1. Why this course?

Since I was a child, I have found myself to be utterly fascinated by how science works. I do not have to look far to find the source of my love for science. Just glancing around the living room my eyes fall upon a whole host of fascinating organisms, seen and unseen they create a brilliant miniature ecosystem with billions of tiny processes and reactions for me to sit and unpick.

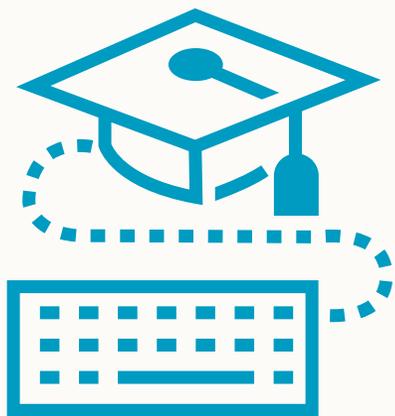
382 characters

My main reason for wanting to study Natural Sciences is the **enjoyment I take from grappling with new and complex ideas**. In Physics, I am particularly drawn to the **atomic scale** and have developed an interest in **quantum models** which **move beyond my current syllabus**. In Biology, I enjoy analysis on a larger scale; my **curiosity is fired by experimental questions such as how to model the distributions of species on islands**.

421 characters



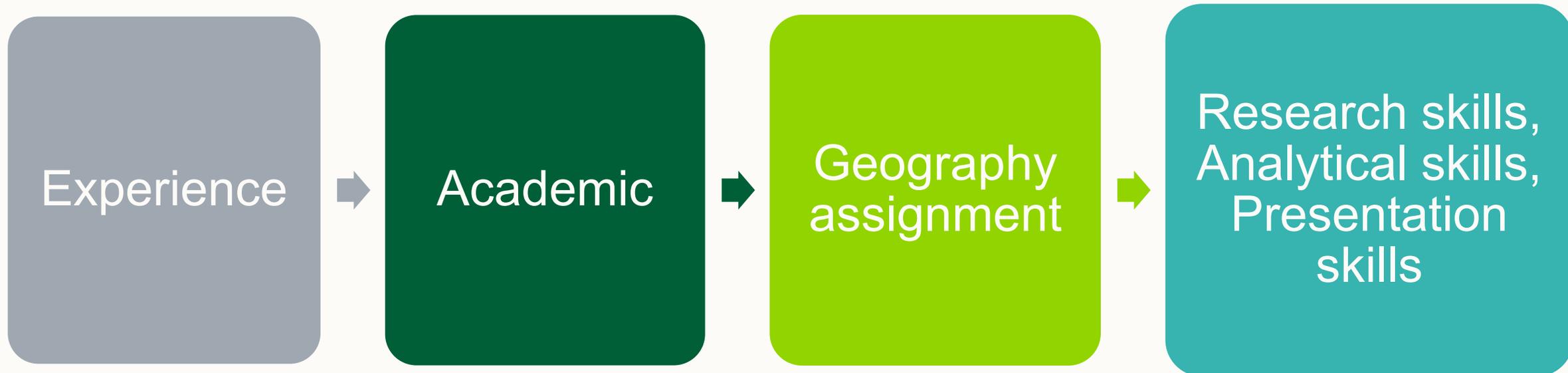
## **Q2: How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?**



- How do your current studies/training relate to your chosen course or subject area?
- What relevant transferable skills do you have?
- Any other relevant educational achievements – not grades!



# Relevant activities





# S.T.A.R

- **Situation:** a recent experience or challenge
- **Task:** what did you have to achieve? What was your overall role?
- **Action:** what did you do to complete the task?
- **Result(s):** what was the outcome? What did you learn/achieve and how will this support you at university?





<b>Situation</b>	Whilst volunteering at a school
<b>Task</b> (demonstrate)	I worked with students as a tutor and mentor, providing mathematics support for them
<b>Action</b> (demonstrate)	I worked with small groups of primary school students, using resources and materials to provide an overview of a topic.
<b>Result</b> (evaluate & reflect)	The students improved their understanding, resulting in them achieving higher marks in the maths test. I developed stronger communication skills and the ability to break down a subject by using resources. These skills will be beneficial when studying Primary Education in knowing how to respond to a diversity of learners.



## 2. Relate your qualifications & research to your course

I am especially fascinated by all aspects of human rights law and am passionate about bringing justice to people who are not able to represent themselves. Human rights are a key part in making society fair and this part of the law shows how it can be a glue that holds society together.

286 characters

I have developed an interest in **human rights law** and read up on the **recent case of two women who were challenging the new law that immigrants wished to join their spouses had to pass a "pre-entry" English language test.** One of the main legal issues centred on whether the **new policy breached the appellants' right to a family life.** I was **struck by the level of uncertainty in the wording of the final judgement.** Although the appeal failed, the judges stated that a "significant number" of future cases, for example, those in which immigrants had learning difficulties, would be likely to breach human rights. **My research led me to reflect** on the fact that the application of specific laws depends on very subtle differences in the circumstances of different cases.

764 characters



### **Q3: What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?**

- Work experience, employment, or volunteering
- Personal life experiences or responsibilities
- Hobbies, extracurriculars (inc. Summer Schools)
- Achievements outside of school or college



# Examples of evidence

In person work experience	Blogs & vlogs	Positions of responsibility	Projects or essays	Mentoring
Virtual work experience	Documentaries	Awards	Books	Tutoring
Work shadowing	Podcasts	Challenges	Influencers	Online subject courses
Paid employment	TED Talks	Personal life experiences	Hobbies	Trips or visits
Volunteering	Articles	Work based learning / training	Clubs	Competitions



## Q3. Work experience

I recently set up and completed a week-long work experience placement at a local graphic design company. The experience gave me a real insight into the graphic design industry and reinforced my desire to study the subject at university.

236 characters

During a work experience placement with a graphic design company, I was particularly interested in the challenges of creating clear infographics. To emphasize the most important information, I experimented with combining different hooks with a range of typographic fonts. I found that the most effective solution depended on creating a clear "narrative" within the image itself. This experience will be invaluable for my design degree as it has equipped me with the practical skills required.

492 characters



## Q3. Extracurricular

Outside of the classroom, I have completed the Duke of Edinburgh Silver award. This helped me to develop a number of skills. I am passionate about swimming and have been a member of the school team since Year 11. During my GCSEs I was also a member of the netball team. Swimming at a high level has provided a perfect training in managing pressurised situations. As a school prefect, I help to organize events such as our recent talent show, I also take parents around the school for tours. For two years, I have worked in a busy local shop and this has developed my abilities to work with people. I feel confident interacting with people from all walks of life and backgrounds.

679 characters

While doing my **Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award**, I had to **complete different team tasks**. I focused on **planning and making sure we communicated** well. I developed skills in **planning tasks** and **leading a team**. Being **bilingual** in English and Portuguese has helped me **connect with different communities**. I've **joined cultural events** and **practiced my language skills**, which has given me a **valuable perspective in understanding different cultures**. During my A-Levels, I **worked in a busy shop** and **swam for the school team**. By balancing these commitments with my studies, my ability in **organising and managing my time has improved significantly**.

632 characters



# Top Tips

**Research &  
start early**

**Complete  
further reading  
and activities**

**Refer to  
current issues**

**Provide  
specific  
examples**

**Save  
externally & do  
multiple drafts**



**Thank-You!**

**Any questions?**

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**How did I do?**



Personal Statements

Presenter name  
Lynsey Johnston

