

**Mentoring Session 2: Applying for UCAS**

**Aim**

- To provide participants with the knowledge and confidence to write their personal statements
- To help participants recognise and articulate their skills and achievements

**Learning Objectives**

By the end of this session, the mentees will be able to...

- Understand the components of a strong UCAS personal statement
- Identify personal achievements and experiences to include in the personal statement
- Recognise the important skills for a successful physics student
- Gain practical tips for writing and refining a personal statement

**Prepare in Advance**

- Review personal experiences with writing a UCAS personal statement
- Prepare a draft of their own personal statement to share (if available)
- Familiarise with the tips and advice for personal statement writing
- Prepare to discuss the skills necessary for a successful undergraduate student

**Scaffolding**

If mentees finish early: ask them to identify their key achievements and skills to include in personal statements (can be done via skilful self drawing/mind maps).

Ask them whether they can use the STARR (which stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result and Reflection) method to frame their skills.

If a mentee cannot identify their own skills/qualities:

- Ask them what they are passionate about and what hobbies do they have, and suggest skills based on their answers
- Allow them to research or complete the UCAS Careers Quiz. What Job Could You Do? (<https://www.ucas.com/careers-quiz>)
- Ask them what they see themselves doing in 5 years

**Session Flow**

**Time**

**Activity**

**5 min**

**Introductions and Aims**

- Welcome and introductions
- Brief overview of the session's objectives and activities

**10 min**

**Discussion: Starting the UCAS Personal Statement**

- Ask the mentees if they have started their personal statements
- Discuss the most important skills for a successful undergraduate physics student
- Discuss any difficulties they are facing

**20 min**

**Sharing Experiences**

- There are 3 parts to this. See the next page for more details:
  - Mentors sharing their experiences with writing a personal statement, includes how they explained their interest in physics, experiences, and wider skills)
  - Mentor shares a draft of their own personal statement (if available/use mini paragraphs as an example)
  - Tips on writing a personal statement: enthusiasm, truthfulness, spelling and grammar, mind-mapping, and drafting

**10 min**

**Mentee Questions**

- Allow time for mentees to ask questions
- Summary of key points discussed
- Closing remarks and encouragement

**10 min**

**Plenary: Cycle 1 Reflection**

- Give the mentees the link/QR code to complete Cycle 1 reflection
  - There are some prompt questions on the next page

## MENTOR GUIDANCE

### MENTORING SESSION 2: APPLYING FOR UCAS

The primary aim of this session is to assist mentees in writing an interesting UCAS personal statement. The personal statement is a critical component of the university application process, providing a platform for students to showcase their motivations, achievements, and suitability for their chosen course. By sharing your own experiences and examples, we aim to simplify the process and offer practical guidance, helping mentees to:

- Understand what universities are looking for in a personal statement.
- Reflect on their own experiences and skills.
- Craft a narrative that highlights their unique strengths and interests.

## WHY ARE WE HELPING WITH PERSONAL STATEMENTS?

- **Build Confidence:** Many students find writing about themselves challenging. By providing support and examples, we can boost their confidence and reduce anxiety about the application process.
- **Promote Self-Reflection:** Encouraging mentees to reflect on their achievements, skills, and experiences helps them to understand their strengths and reach their goals.
- **Provide Real-Life Insight:** Sharing your own journeys offers mentees a realistic example of what a successful application looks like, making the process more relatable and less intimidating.

## SHARING YOUR UCAS PRE-UNIVERSITY JOURNEY

As a minimum the lead mentor needs to share their UCAS journey. Think about including answers to the following questions:

### 1 Explaining Your Interest in physical science

- **Start with Passion:** Describe how your interest in physical science began and what specifically drew you to the subject.
- **Key Influences:** Mention any key influences or moments that solidified your decision to pursue physics, such as a challenging experiment, or a particular scientist you admire.

### 2 Including Relevant Experiences

- **Academic Achievements:** Highlight any relevant academic achievements, such as high grades in science subjects, competitions or participation in science fairs.
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Discuss extracurricular activities that demonstrate your commitment and enthusiasm for physical science, such as science clubs, competitions, wider reading or projects.
- **Work Experience and Internships:** If applicable, mention any work experience or internships related to physical science.

### 3 Wider Skills and Achievements

- **Leadership and Teamwork:** Include experiences that showcase leadership and teamwork skills, such as leading a group project or being part of a sports team.
- **Additional Qualifications:** Mention any additional qualifications or achievements, like the Duke of Edinburgh Award, music grades, or any other certifications that highlight your skills and dedication.
- **Taster Courses and Summer Schools:** Share any experiences from higher education taster courses or summer schools, emphasising how they influenced your decision to study physics.

## MENTOR'S ROLE DURING THE SESSION

### 1. Facilitate Discussion

Start with open-ended questions to get mentees talking about their experiences and any difficulties they are facing with their personal statements or general UCAS application. For example, open-ended questions are:

- Usually started with “How”, “Why”, and “What”
- Have no set or predetermined answers
- Requires response to explain

### 2. Share your experiences

- Offer your own experiences with writing a personal statement, including what worked well for you and any challenges you overcame.
- Discuss its structure, content, and the thought process behind it.

### 3. Offer Practical Tips

- Give concrete advice on writing a personal statement, such as being enthusiastic, truthful, and paying attention to spelling and grammar.
- Guide mentees through a reflection on their achievements and skills, helping them to identify what to include in their personal statements.
- If comfortable, share a draft of your own personal statement. If not, there are some good ones on the internet.
- Can use the UCAS Personal Statement Worksheet (<https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/ucas-personal-statement-worksheet.pdf>) :

#### Useful Websites:

1. UCAS Official Website: <https://www.ucas.com>
2. UCAS How To Write Your Undergraduate Personal Statement: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/how-write-personal-statement>
3. UCAS Dates and Deadlines for Uni Applications: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/dates-and-deadlines-uni-applications#2025-entry-application-deadlines>

#### Example Questions:

1. Why are you applying for your chosen course(s)?
2. Why does this subject interest you? Include evidence that you understand what's required to study the course, e.g. if applying for science courses, show that you know how scientific the subject is.
3. Why do you think you're suitable for the course(s)? Do you have any particular skills and experience that will help you to succeed on the course(s)?
4. Do your current or previous studies relate to the course(s) that you have chosen? If so, how?
5. Have you taken part in any other activities that demonstrate your interest in the course(s)?

**During the discussion, make sure to actively engage all mentees, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to contribute. If a mentee brings up a point that isn't quite what you were looking for, acknowledge it respectfully and find a way to incorporate it into the discussion. Remember, every contribution is valuable and important to your mentees' learning experience.**

## MENTORING SESSION 2: APPLYING FOR UCAS

### BRIGHT IDEAS!

This page contains ideas for alternative sessions, changes/additions, extra activities, etc.  
Feel free to use as you wish!

#### UCAS Research

Ask the mentees to open the UCAS website, and encourage them to get creative exploring different degree options.

- Remind the mentees to be open-minded about degree routes, as there will be many they haven't heard about before!
- Encourage mentees to take notes and write down pros/cons of each degree they are interested in.
  - This information can be used in the future when they apply for degrees!



#### Exploring Worries

If you think the mentees are particularly anxious about university, take time to focus on this. Open a discussion about why they are feeling this way, so you can help address those concerns. You could even tailor future sessions to come back to this!

#### Career Hot Potato

1. Suggest a STEM career (e.g. biomedical scientist, engineer, etc.)
2. Randomly select a mentee. They have to come up with a degree that would enable someone to work in that field, and list one thing that would be useful from that degree in the chosen field.
3. Continue randomly selecting mentees until they run out of ideas!

**You can repeat this with different careers, or choose careers that the mentees have previously shown interest in!**

#### I Wanna Be Like You

Choose some role models or famous people in a STEM industry, and explore their university/career journeys. Really nice way to show there's no fixed path to success or a good career!

An example: Bessie Blount (left-handed, nurse, invented apparatus for disabled veterans, then changed career at 55 to become a forgery expert with Scotland Yard)