

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Kathryn Boast (she/her)

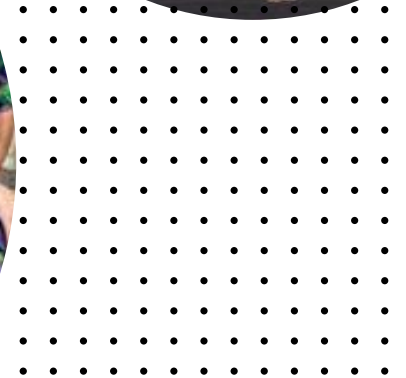
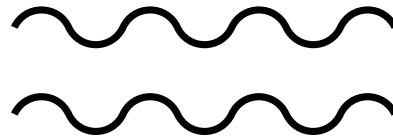
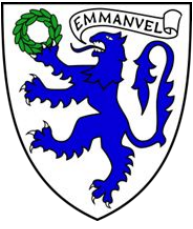
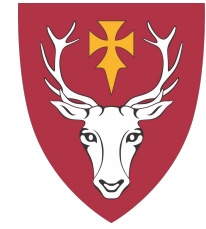
**HERTFORD COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD**

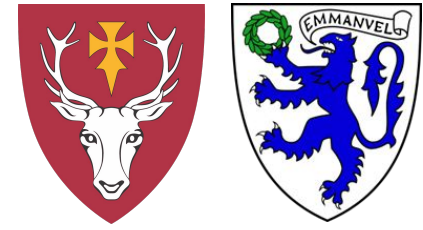
Francesca Mann (she/her)

**EMMANUEL COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

Lucy Stevens (she/her)

**HERTFORD COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD**





SESSION OUTLINE & AIMS

By the end of this session you will...



Understand the
timeline &
admissions
process



Understand
purpose of a
personal
statement



Understand how
personal
statements are
used

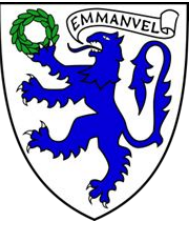
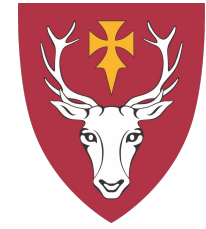
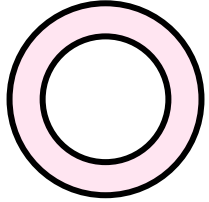


Know what to
include in a
personal
statement

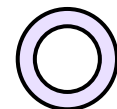
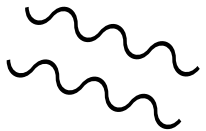


Understand what
makes a good
personal
statement



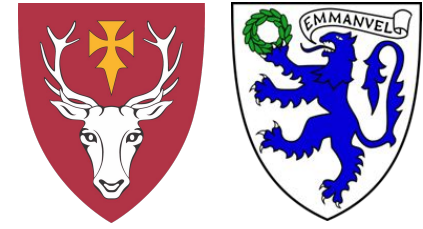


THE OXBRIDGE APPLICATION PROCESS





OUTLINE OF THE PROCESS



1 Choose course



2 Choose college or make open application



3 Check admission assessment arrangements



4 Submit UCAS application



5 Additional Information (only for Cambridge)



6 Submit written work/take test



7 Interview in December



8 Decision in January

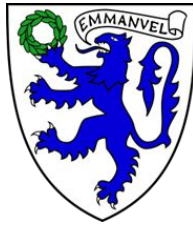
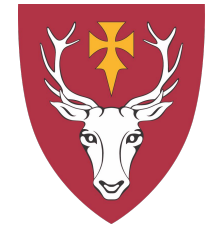




TIMELINE OF ADMISSIONS

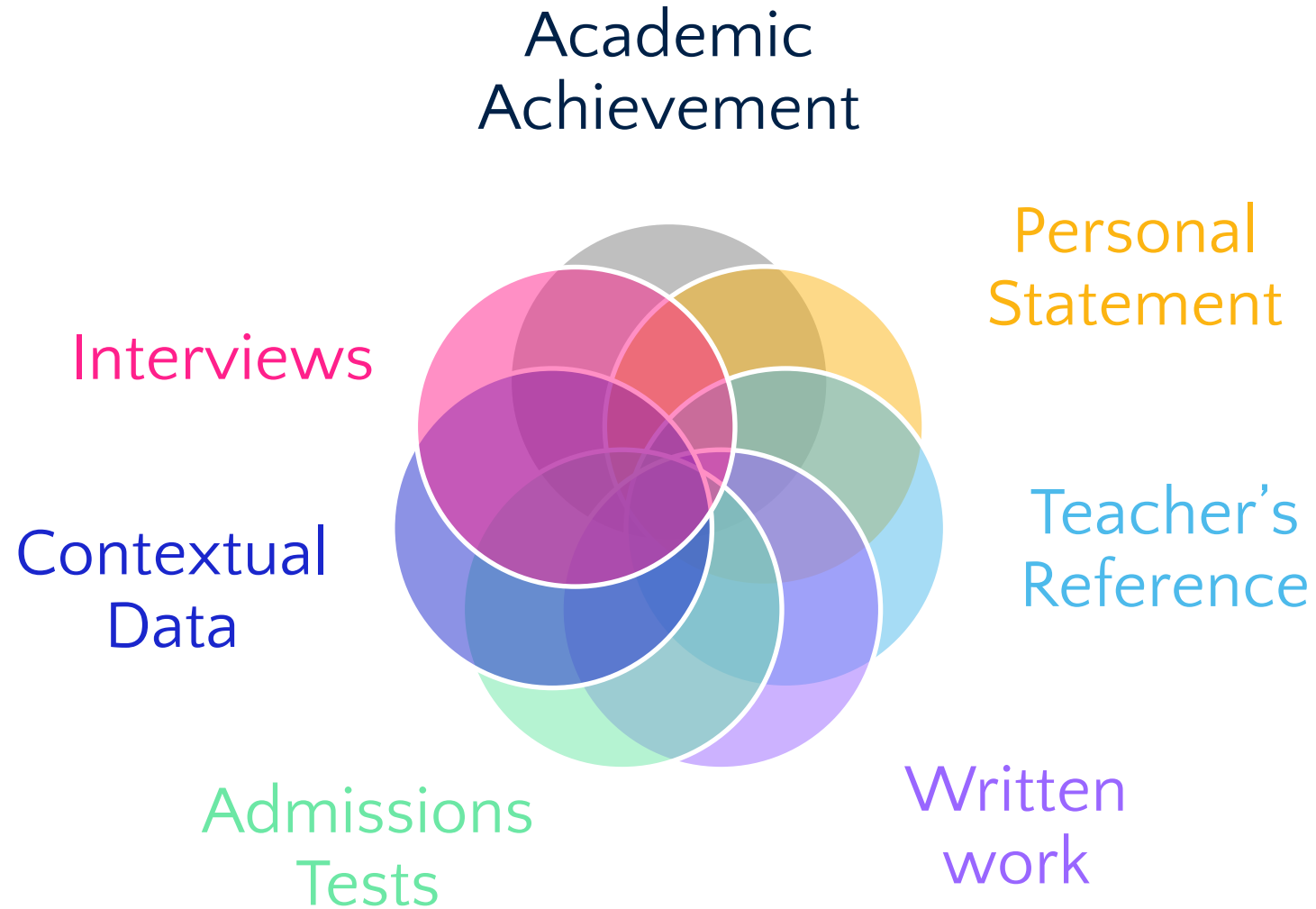
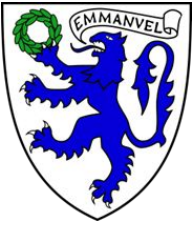
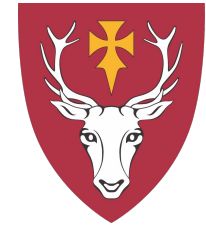
You need to apply a year before the start date of your course through the UCAS website. Applications open in early September, and the deadline is 15 October.



HOW YOU APPLY 2024 ENTRY





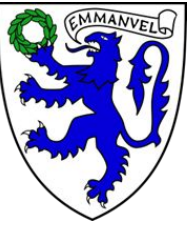
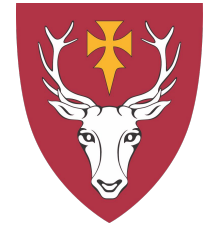
WHAT DO WE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT?





ADMISSIONS TESTS & WRITTEN WORK

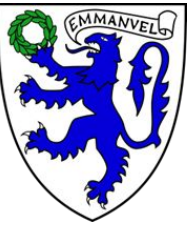
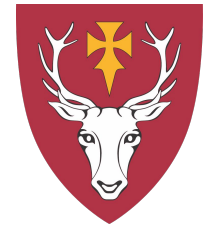
- Register in advance
- Practice with free online past papers
- Designed to challenge you
- New problems and scenarios
- Marked school essays for some subjects
- Demonstrate your analytical, reasoning, language and writing skills.





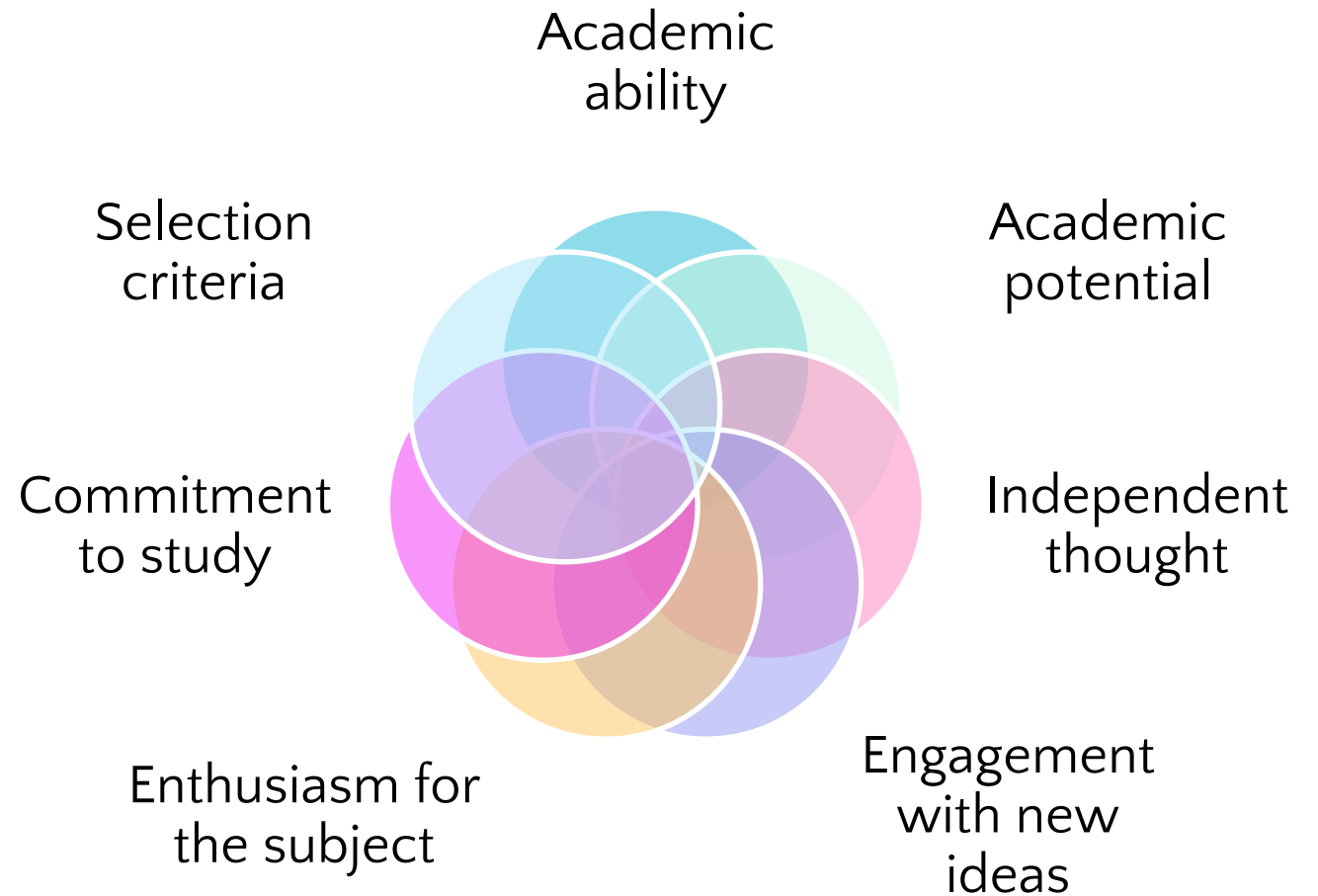
INTERVIEWS

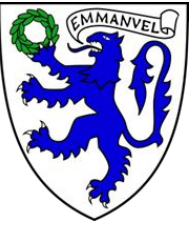
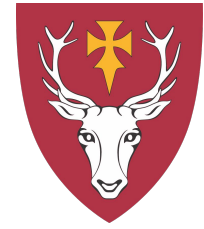
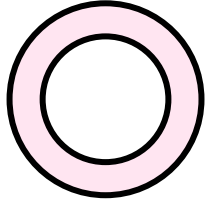
- Percentage of candidates interviewed varies between Oxford & Cambridge (Oxford: 50% vs Cambridge: 75%)
- A two-way conversation about your subject
- Unfamiliar material to see how you think
- Might discuss personal statement and/or written work



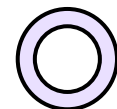
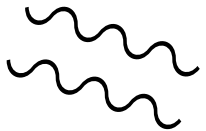
○ WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

- Academic ability and potential to succeed
- Self-motivation, commitment and enthusiasm
- Ability to think independently/critically
- Subject-specific selection criteria

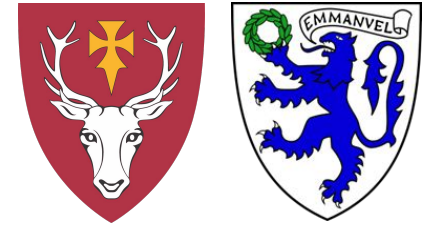




PERSONAL STATEMENTS



STARTER QUESTION



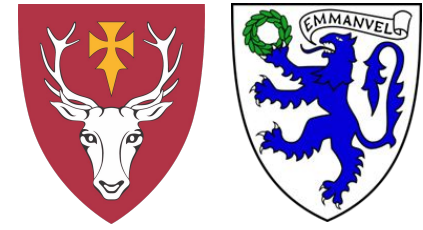
What is the point of a personal statement?



○ WHAT IS THE POINT OF A PERSONAL STATEMENT?

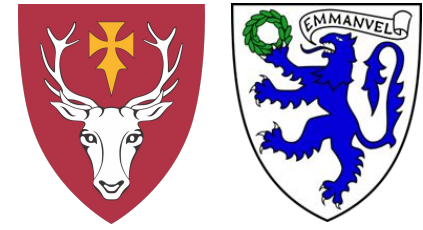
Personal Statements....

- Give anonymous data a personality
- Convey your motivation and enthusiasm
- Explain your commitment to the subject
- Provide a potential starting point for interviews



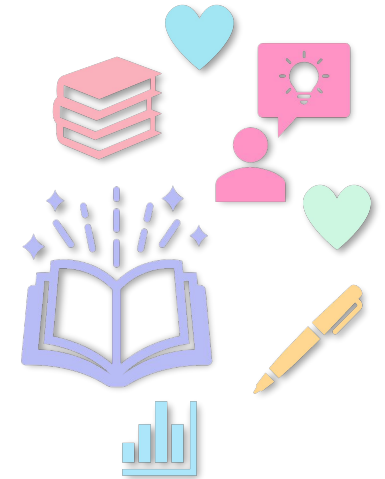


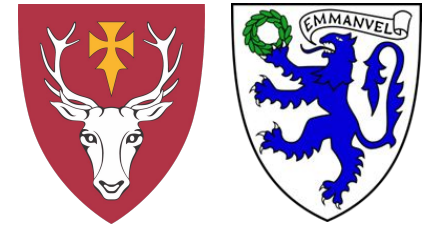
YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT



Your personal statement....

- ...can't be longer than 4,000 characters
- ...goes to all your university choices
- ...is just one part of the whole process
- ...could be your only opportunity to show your interest and motivation to some universities



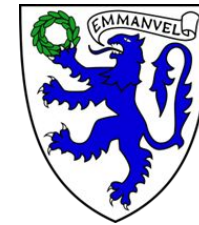


WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

- Appreciates the scope of Psychology
- Can evaluate evidence
- Can consider issues from different perspectives
- Has capacity for logical and creative thinking
- Appreciates importance of empirical evidence in arguments
- Can cope with quantitative demands of course

Selection criteria
for Experimental
Psychology at
Oxford





TOP TIPS



PLANNING IS KEY

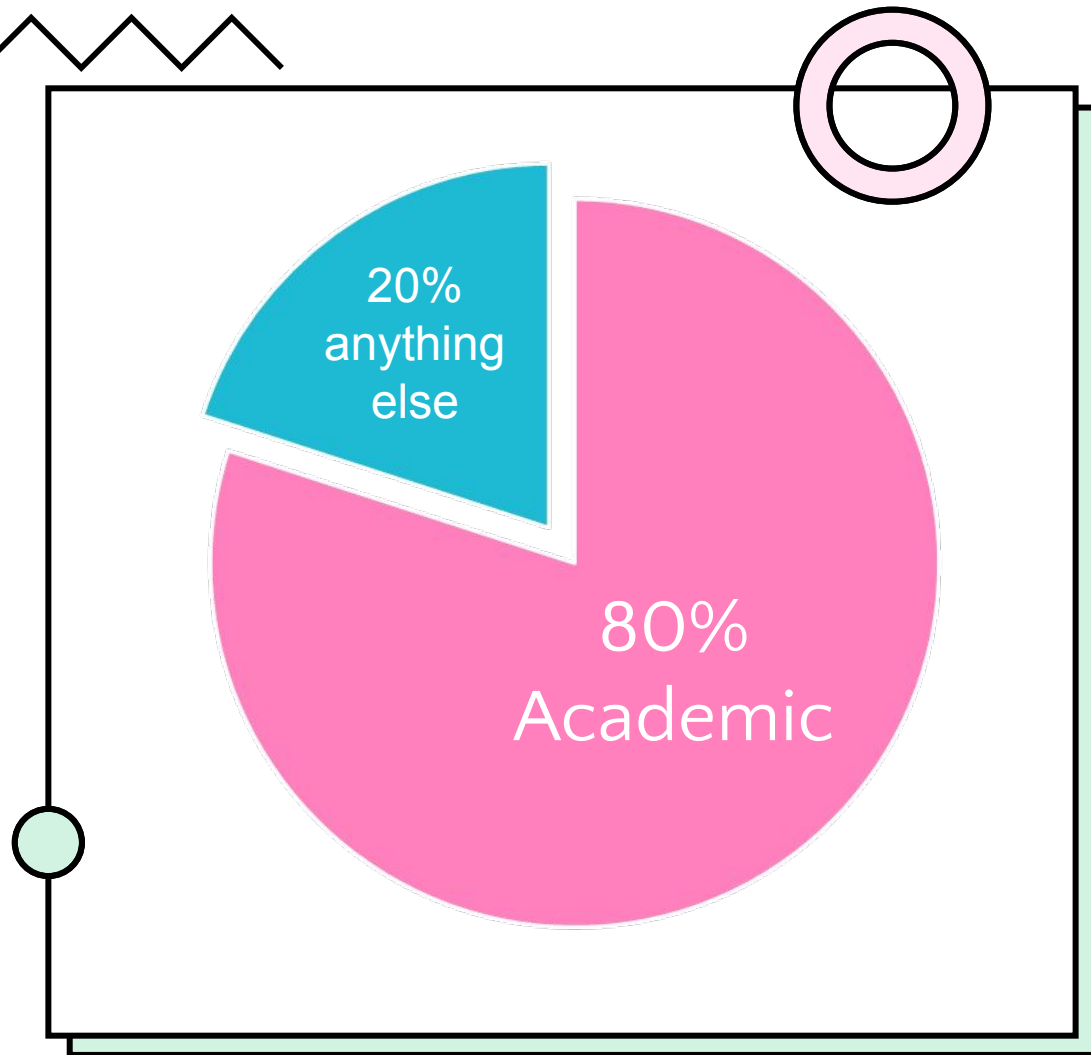
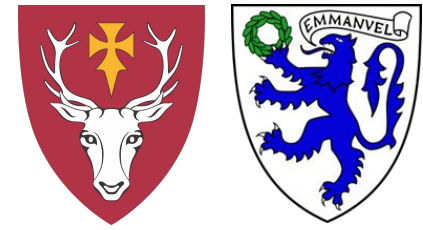
- Make a plan and check the basics

HONEST & REFLECTIVE

- Your personal statement is about you!

SHOW, DON'T TELL

- Show us, don't just tell us
- 



DON'T TRY TOO HARD

- Don't strain to be distinctive

AVOID REPETITION

- Limited space to show your interests, try not to repeat yourself

CENTER YOUR INTERESTS

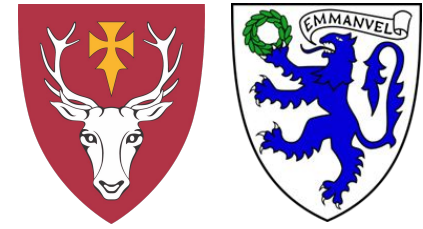
- Focus on your own interests, which bits of your subject do you particularly like?



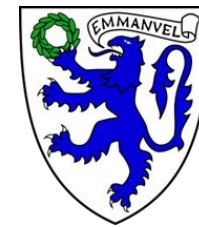


DEMONSTRATING YOUR ENTHUSIASM, MOTIVATION AND COMMITMENT

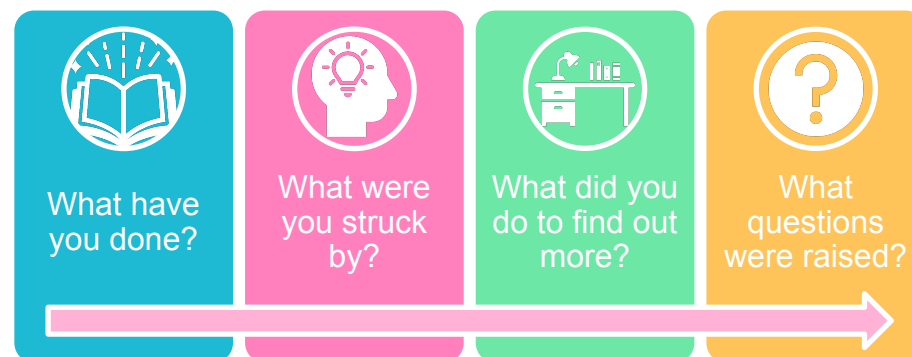
- Academic books, journals and articles
- Lectures, podcasts and documentaries
- Museums and exhibitions
- Academic competitions
- Clubs, societies and work experience



○ DEMONSTRATING YOUR ENTHUSIASM, MOTIVATION AND COMMITMENT

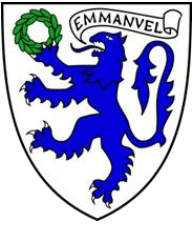


Listening to the Law in Action podcast on human rights introduced me to the intersection of formal and informal justice systems. I was struck by the way in which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights simultaneously protects our physical, mental, social and cultural rights and the way in which it is enforced. This led me to watch a lecture by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC on forced organ harvesting in China. I was fascinated by how informal Peoples' Tribunals have investigated these abuses of human rights in a way which the official court system cannot do itself. This demonstrated to me how the law can be used directly by the people it protects, rather than just being set and enforced by official bodies. I am now investigating how this concept can be applied in other areas of human rights.





MAKE EVERY CHARACTER COUNT



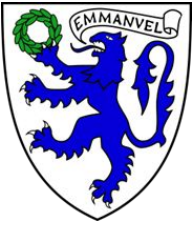
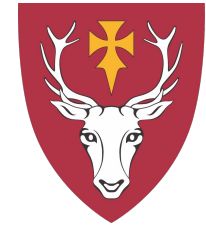
Another major stepping stone in my knowledge of Egyptology was the Oxford UNIQ Summer School in Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in July 2019. This not only improved my understanding of Egypt, in particular the transliteration of hieroglyphs, but also provided me with a brilliant appreciation of university life, making me feel confident that I would enjoy a challenging academic environment

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MAKE EVERY CHARACTER COUNT



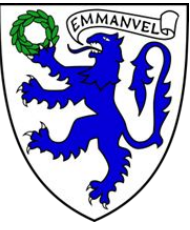
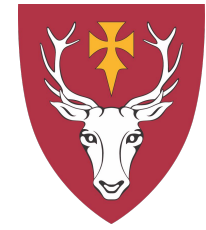
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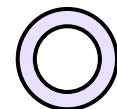
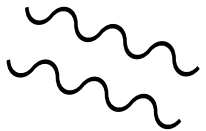
LET'S LOOK AT SOME PERSONAL STATEMENTS

We are going to look at two different personal statements to see what we think of them.

What feedback would we give this person? What surprises you?

What do you like?

What would you improve?





PERSONAL STATEMENT 1

Staring upon the monumental statues at Abu Simbel in August confirmed my long-held conviction that Egyptology was all I would ever want to study at university. It was my uncle's work as an archaeologist that first sparked my interest in History and the Ancient World and, from this, Egyptology became my passion from a very young age. I remember pouring over books filled with pictures of the Valley of the Kings and the Pyramids as a child, and to get the chance to study this subject would be to achieve a dream.

To build on this love of history and archaeology, I obtained a work placement at Powis Castle. This included room stewarding and disability awareness training, which helped improve my communication and team-working skills. Furthermore, I worked at the Egypt Centre in Swansea University for a week, where my role as Gallery Assistant gave me an insight into museum work and conservation – two careers I am considering in the future.

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Experiencing the sights of Ancient Egypt further piqued my interest. In addition to getting the chance to explore the Temples of Luxor and Karnak, I was able to spend three nights in Cairo visiting the Museum of Antiquities, the Pyramids of Giza and Saqqara. The ability to finally see things that I had spent so long reading about in books was fantastic. To expand my knowledge in the field of archaeology, I am currently completing my Silver Duke of Edinburgh Award, and as part of this have chosen to learn archaeology as my skill. Not only does this give me a good foothold into some of the methods used at a dig site, but it has also enable me to research earlier periods of history, such as the Mesolithic and Neolithic eras of the Stone Age. The award has also helped to develop my leadership and teamwork skills in difficult situations.

As Deputy Head Girl, I have refined my communication skills through contributing to Governors' meetings and speaking at various school events. My passion for public speaking has encouraged me to co-found a school debating society, where I have learnt that teamwork and listening are key skills; I will bring these experiences to my studies at university





PERSONAL STATEMENT 2

I am fascinated by the language and culture of the ancient world and relish learning ancient languages, texts and scripts. Studying Classical Civilization at A Level has elicited a strong love of the past and motivation to discover more.

I read extracts from Lucretius' 'On the Nature of Things' and found it fascinating as it showed that the Romans had a great understanding of what is the basis for many aspects of modern science. The fact that Lucretius proposed that the gods had no impact in the lives of mortals (Book 1), that there was no afterlife (Book 3) and that everything is made up of tiny particles (Book 1) really amazed me. I found the Antikythera machine built by the Ancient Greeks equally fascinating because of the remarkable way it calculated eclipses, orbits of the moon and planets. I think studying Physics and Maths has complemented Classics as they allow me to approach new topics in a multi-disciplinary way and strengthen my analytical skills.

Following the study of Ovid's 'Amores' in school, I read widely around the genre of love elegy; in particular I chose to focus on the depiction of the beloved as they appeared to be a distant character in the poems. I read 'The Heroides' by Ovid and 'The Power of Love' by Propertius as well as the female poet Sulpicia. It was interesting to see the rare fragments of Sulpicia's poems and the contrast between male and female styles. I have come to appreciate the stylistic differences between rhetorical authors such as Cicero, the realistic narratives of Livy, and the epic works of Homer and Virgil.

Growing up in Northumberland has meant that I have been able to visit Roman sites around Hadrian's Wall such as Segedunum and Vindolandia. I particularly enjoyed seeing the excavated writing tablets at Vindolandia including an invitation to a party from Claudia Severa, which is one of the earliest examples of female writing in Latin.

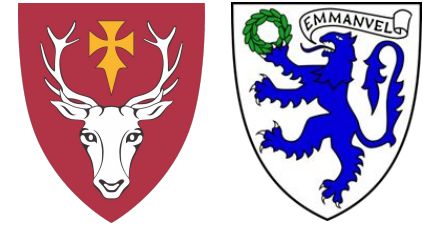
This first-hand experience inspired me to explore ancient languages further and I completed my EPQ on the translation of Ancient Greek, improving my independent learning skills in addition to my A Level work. This led me to join a 'Zooniverse' project where I helped to transcribe fragments of Ancient Greek texts in the Oxyrhynchus Collection to identify them. Furthermore, I have delved into the lives of the Ancient Egyptians and looked at hieroglyphs and the gods, both of which I have found fascinating.

In my spare time, I have been learning some basic Chinese, Japanese and Italian as I take pleasure in being able to communicate with people from around the world and understand other cultures. I enjoy playing the saxophone and am a member of the county Youth Jazz Orchestra. I love art and have always spent a lot of time drawing as a means to relax and express my creativity.





SOME MORE EXAMPLES



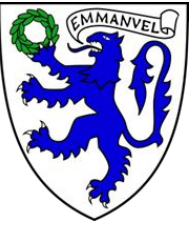
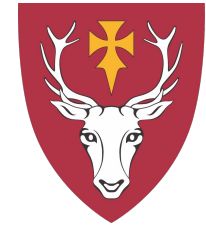
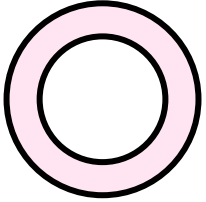
HISTORY:

The idea of the bottom up change, which arguably formed the catalyst for the political turmoil of 2016, is one I have repeatedly encountered. From the early-modern rebellions in South West England to the February revolution in Russia, discontent from below has proven to be a powerful force for change across time and space. With this in mind, it is unsurprising that historians have increasingly turned to social history to unpick the causation of major historical events and the impact of policies imposed from above on wider society. This was highlighted when I represented the UK in a collaborative history conference in Berlin on “Finding our Place in History”. The event situated 20th century German history in an international perspectives using Thomas Harding’s “The House by the Lake” as a framework to explore the everyday lives of Germans across the century. This seminar emphasised the value of individual experience in history and led me to consider the place of individual testimony within the wider historical narrative.

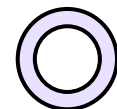
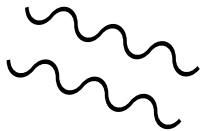
PSYCHOLOGICAL & BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES:

I explored other aspects of psychology during a residential at Cambridge. I considered issues such as flawed methodology in psychological research. I considered how famous experiments, such as Mischel’s ‘Marshmallow Test’, remain prominent in popular thinking even after contradictory evidence has emerged. These workshops led me to read Goldacre’s ‘Bad Science’ which highlighted how many headline-grabbing findings are based on appeals to authority instead of being underpinned by reliable evidence. This risks the general public to accepting exaggerated claims in the media instead of critically analysing the underlying research. This important principle was demonstrated throughout my EPQ where I assessed whether the cognitive or behavioural aspect of CBT is more effective in treating children and adolescents with anxiety, depression and autism.





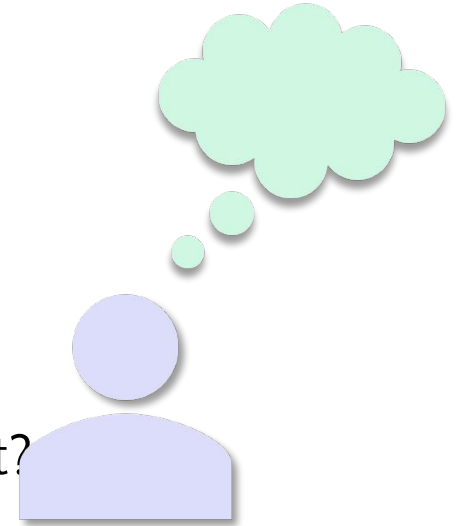
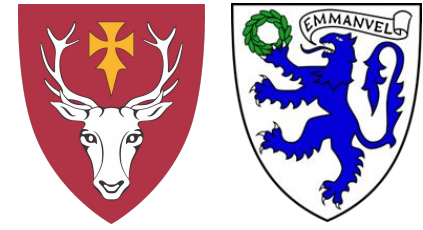
CONSTRUCTING YOUR OWN PERSONAL STATEMENT





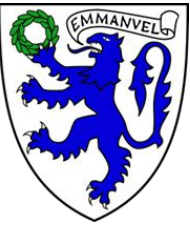
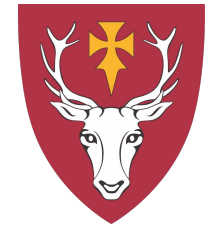
WHERE TO START

- What do I know about the course and its modules?
- Why do I want to study the subject?
- What do I like about the subject?
- What do I already know?
- What have I read, watched or attended that is relevant to the subject?
- What excites me about the subject?
- What are my academic strengths?
- What makes me a good fit for studying this course?

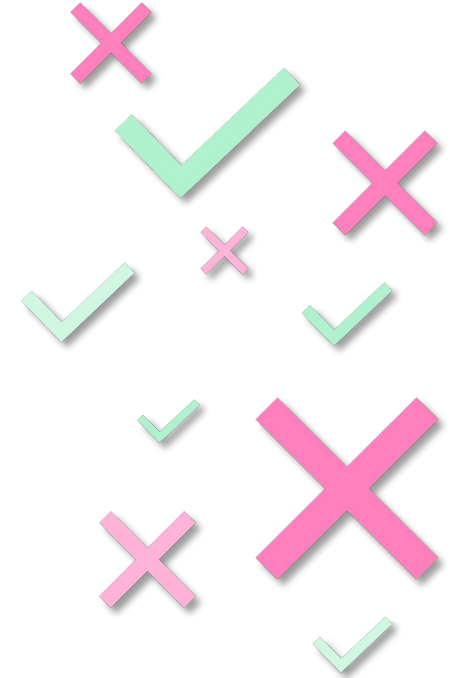




SOME FINAL DOS & DON'TS



- **DO** apply for a course you really want to study.
- **DO** be yourself: tell the truth about your interests.
- **DO** sell yourself: this is not the time for modesty.
- **DO** re-read your personal statement before an interview – the tutors may ask you to talk about things you've mentioned
- **DO** read the UCAS guidance on personal statements.
- **DON'T** be tempted to make anything up, as you might be asked about it at interview.
- **DON'T** copy anyone else's personal statement. UCAS uses plagiarism detection software.
- **DON'T** list qualifications like your GCSE grades or anything else that's covered elsewhere on the application.
- **DON'T** just list your other achievements: you need to evaluate them.
- **DON'T** feel the need to be dramatic in order to be memorable.



WHAT'S NEXT?

- Write notes & opinions
- Don't be afraid to redraft
- Ask for feedback

