

## ‘Where do I go from here?’– Writing your personal statement

We’ve all been there before. You’ve got something to write. There’s a deadline approaching. You’ve written the odd line or so, and yet you find yourself sat there, staring at the screen and wondering... ‘Where do I go from here?’ Or perhaps you’re unsure how to start at all.

While writer’s block is no mystery, for some writing a competitive personal statement can certainly feel like one. With every draft you complete, you can slip into questioning ‘Is this good enough?’ or ‘Is this what they’re looking for?’

Part of this is down to how the personal statement is understood. All too often, the personal statement is perceived as something to catch you out, rather than an opportunity for you to showcase your enthusiasm and talent. Much of the worry surrounding the personal statement can occur due to a lack of clarity about what it is, and what admissions tutors are looking for.

So today’s blog post is here to bring some clarity, and encourage you to keep writing! How? By shedding some light on what Warwick likes to see in a personal statement, while addressing some key questions surrounding it. So let’s get to it, question number one...

### Question One. What is the purpose of your personal statement?

With 4000 characters and 47 lines, the personal statement is a piece of writing which expresses your desire to study a subject at university. In this discussion, we like to see why that subject interests you, and examples which show this interest.

### Question Two. What makes a ‘good’ personal statement?



**A good personal statement**

- Focuses on your academic interest in the course.
- Is well-written and structured.
- Is analytical and reflective.
- Is *personal* to you.

A great question! While there’s no perfect personal statement, a good personal statement does not just tell us that you’re interested in a subject area, but *shows* us your interest. For example, if you say you’re interested in *postmodern American poetry*, this should be followed with ‘because’. In our personal statement talks, we often summarise it like this:

A good personal statement is one that...

*Focuses on academic interest in the course.*

*Is well-written and structured.*

*Is analytical and reflective.*

*Is personal to you.*

The final point is important to remember, as there’s no set script to a writing winning personal statement. We’re not looking for outlandish or exceptional examples either. The key thing is keeping your personal statement focused on your academic interest, drawing from examples which you’ve engaged with or participated in, and reflecting on these. We’ll unpack that next.

### Question Three. What do we look for in wider reading examples?

There's no prescriptive list, but wider reading might include: *Journal articles, books, podcasts, taster lectures, magazines, documentaries...*

Further examples might include drawing from your current studies, relevant work experience, subject-related activities, and career aspirations.

These are merely things to think about, and we certainly don't expect a long list detailing everything you've ever engaged with. In fact, we'd recommend you avoid lists!

We're looking for you to be critically evaluative about whatever you write. It's better to focus on fewer examples and unpack these. For example: *What did you get out of it? Did you agree/disagree with it? How has what you've done influenced your desire to study the course you're applying to?*

This brings us to...

### Question Four. What is critical evaluation?

Critical evaluation is the ability to reflect on what you've experienced, or what you've read and learned. It's the ability to question and challenge; to come to your own reasoned conclusions.

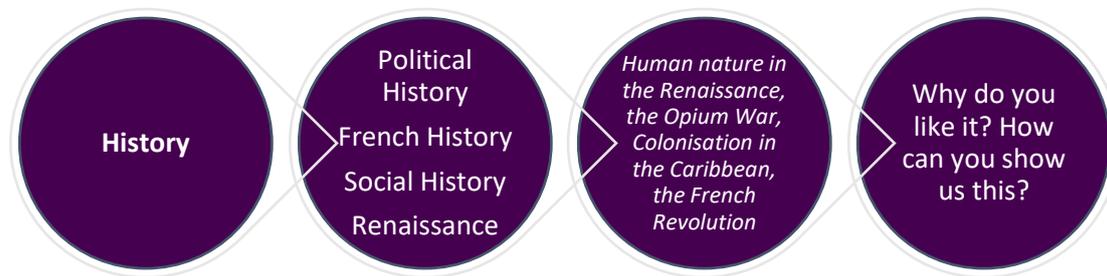
What critical evaluation is	What critical evaluation isn't
<i>"Wanting to better understand...I decided to read 'Thinking, Fast and Slow'...it challenged my presumption that..."</i>	<i>"I regularly read 'The Economist' and have explored various other works, such as 'Freakonomics' and 'Thinking, Fast and Slow'"</i>
<b>Shows us</b> their interest in the subject.	<b>Tells</b> us what they've read, but no evidence they've read these things.
<b>Reflects</b> on their example.	<b>Lists</b> what they've read, with no critical engagement.

To help unpack this, let's have a quick glance at what critical evaluation *is* and what *it isn't*:

Ultimately, your desire to study a subject is best demonstrated rather than said. Your commitment to study a particular course is also very personal to you, so don't be afraid to authentically convey why you want to study the subject. For example, any aspiring Chemistry student could write:

'My favourite subject is Chemistry, as it has always been wonderfully challenging.'

Yet, this doesn't tell us much at all. We want to know: What is it that interests *you* about your course, why do you like it and how can you show us this? You might find the diagram below helpful:



*What interests you? History student example*

That's all for now. This is just a short glimpse into what we look for in a personal statement at Warwick. To get a fuller picture, I recommend watching our [Personal Statement video](#) and viewing our [admissions pages](#). All the best with applying, and if you'd like to find out more about studying at Warwick and the array of opportunities we have available, you can book onto our [upcoming Open Days](#) or visit our [Digital Resources webpage](#) for some staff and student-led videos.

**Esther Brown, UK Student Recruitment Team**