



# What does the University of Aberdeen look for in a personal statement reference?

Just like applicants who dread writing their Personal Statement, there are no doubt some Form/Guidance Teachers & Career Advisers who approach the annual exercise of writing the matching UCAS reference with some trepidation and anxiety!

First, I want to reassure you that those references are indeed read, and even appreciated, by University Admissions Selectors. Your references help us to understand your pupils better, to gain a greater insight into why they want to study the chosen degree subject and ensures that we have as complete a picture of the applicant as possible.

The 4000 characters (or infamous 47 lines!) in the UCAS reference provide University admissions teams across the country with vital information that supports every applicant, and therefore is a key component of the overall application.

Here are my top things to consider when writing a UCAS reference:

## **A** TELL US WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW:

We value **your** opinion on the **suitability** of the applicant for their chosen degree subject. An honest reflection on their **abilities, motivation, and potential** for the subject of study and/or career is very helpful to our Admission Selectors.

You can also include information about their **skills** and **attributes** that will help them succeed at university, using specific examples from their **academic** and **personal achievements** if possible.

## **B** TELL US WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW:

We especially need to know if there are **extenuating circumstances** which affected your pupil in their senior phase of education, for example serious illness, bereavement, were they in care or are they a carer, did they experience financial difficulties, etc.? It would be helpful if this information included when or how long it was a factor, or an estimate of how it may have influenced school exams. This information can **support** that given in the Personal Statement by the applicant and can also be very helpful in explaining any **discrepancies** in the academic performance of your student.

## **C** TELL US WHAT YOU THINK WE NEED TO KNOW:

**You** know your students best. This is an opportunity to give us a **personal insight** into them. From their school and classroom activities, to extra-curricular or community engagement, please share with us how your pupils have **engaged with their world**.

Moreover, given your **experience** and **insight**, where you can draw attention to **stand-out** applicants within a cohort, this can be extremely valuable information for those reviewing thousands of applications.

Finally, I would add that most universities welcome ongoing dialogue with guidance teachers / careers advisers, even after an application has been submitted. At the University of Aberdeen, we certainly do! If new information comes to light that you feel would be important for the Admission Team to be aware of, please get in touch.

Helena Ziegler, Manager, UK Student Recruitment Team

University of Aberdeen

✉ [ukteam@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:ukteam@abdn.ac.uk)