* Your personal statement limit is 4,000 characters or 47 lines long. You do not have to use the whole allocation, but if your statement is really short, it is likely you’ve not included everything about yourself that a university might be interested in.
* You do not need to list the qualifications you have achieved or what level as this is outlined in other parts of the application.
* You also don’t need to introduce yourself, for example: ‘My name is Ben and I am hoping to study Engineering.’
* The most important feature of the Personal Statement is the expression of your interest and commitment to studying the chosen subject at university level for the following 3 or 4 years, and exploring how you have prepared yourself for this next step in your academic career.
* Undertaking some extra reading (or podcasts/documentaries/work experience) can be really valuable – but rather than simply recalling this in the statement, for example, ‘I have read The Beautiful Cure by Daniel Davis’, you need to critically engage with the content – consider the contribution of an individual’s discovery to the scientific landscape, or assess how convincing you found a political standpoint expressed within a podcast.
* If you do not have space for a conclusion/summary type section, then you do not need to include it. It would be better to have a section on your interests/hobbies and discuss the valuable transferable skills (such as teamwork/commitment) that mean that you are equipped and ready for university life.
* Be prepared to write multiple drafts; this statement is really important and for some universities is absolutely vital to their admissions process. Therefore, it needs to be really refined, similarly to a piece of coursework. By completing a first draft now, you will be in a strong position to be making progress with your application in the Autumn term.

Helpful Bits & Bobs:

* Opinions on your Personal Statement are subjective. You could continually send it to your tutor, teachers, parents and friends and always receive additional advice/feedback. At some point, you have to decide that you are totally happy with it and that it is the best representation of yourself and submit it.
* Sometimes Microsoft Word and UCAS count the characters/lines differently. I advise you write your drafts in Word and then copy and paste it into UCAS followed by a double-check that you’ve not been cut off mid-sentence!
* The hardest part (in my opinion!) is the opening, so during this initial workroom, start with a middle paragraph, or a section on your hobbies/interests (this should be about 20%-30% of the total statement).

**Example Personal Statement (History of Art) with commentary:**

Art is a powerful way to communicate messages about the present and future whilst also staying in constant dialogue with the past. I have always found myself absorbed by the art world but have developed an increasing curiosity into how art mirrors social and political events as my views on the world have evolved. I value art history as it is a subject of great cross-curricular value; my studies have ranged from Ofili’s provocative Virgin Mary to close analysis of the Parthenon's ionic frieze.

I have the privilege of living in Copenhagen during my school holidays which grants me access to a plethora of art, of which I take advantage by regularly visiting galleries. At the National Gallery, I find Willumsen’s ‘A Mountain Climber’ a compelling painting due to his exciting, unorthodox use of a range of colours for the woman’s face. Consequently, I was inspired to be more experimental with brighter colour palettes and this was fruitful for my creative development; the use of unusual strokes of bold pigment was the initial spark for my interest in Fauvism. As a consequence, I completed an essay on whether portraiture must have a true likeness to the sitter, which led me to explore the ‘The Green Line’. I was intrigued by Matisse’s interpretation of light and shadow, which had been translated into planes of bold colour. My first impression was of vibrancy and an intimate insight into the character of his wife, despite its absence of realism. I then read Taschen’s, ‘Henri Matisse, Master of Colour’ which taught me about the controversy of the wild Fauvist movement. The text explored how although Matisse had used saturated and turbulent colours for ‘The Green Line’, the overall effect of the painting was tranquil; this interested me because it challenged my initial response. Jacobus’ description of the painting in ‘Henri Matisse’ also rebuffed my first interpretation; I now acknowledge the assured manner of the model and can identify the calm amongst the saturated hues and this served to affirm my contention that portraiture does not have to have a true likeness to the sitter.

Independently, I follow several small artists on Instagram, for example Morag Caister who I discovered after watching Sky’s ‘Portrait Artist of the Year.’ I was so inspired that I included her in my art coursework and responded to her style in my own paintings. Following artists on Instagram means that I engage regularly with their new work which is fascinating as it allows me to tailor my feed into my very own ‘Salon’. By combining my Art History lessons with regular interaction with lesser-known artists on Instagram, I find I have a more holistic but also unconventional approach to my art. I will be attending a lecture at the Cheltenham Literature Festival exploring Goya and I fly to Rome in November to visit and engage with art and architecture from classical antiquity which will further enrich my zeal for Art.

In English, I have enjoyed encountering authors who’s work my knowledge of Art History has enhanced. For example, a close reading of Agbabi’s poem ‘Eat Me’ alludes to colonial exploitation through her use of exotic metaphors. I have linked her work to Gaugin and his colonial attitude towards the peoples, and women especially, of Tahiti. My eyes have been opened to the shared areas of interest of both writers and artists. For instance, the search for the sublime conveyed in the works of Wordsworth and Keats is reflected visually in the work of Turner. I am completing my Art A Level off timetable and History of Art on a reduced schedule, demonstrating that I am an independent and self-motivated pupil. I have recently written on, “How Bacon and Freud used portraiture as a means of self-reflection"; introspection, specifically via self-portraiture, requires vulnerability and self-analysis, and I found researching and writing about these artists both pleasurable and informative. As a genuinely curious student, I look forward to learning more in a truly stimulating environment.