



**Burnside  
College**

# **PERSONAL STATEMENT GUIDANCE**

June 2020





# VIDEO 1 of 5

## INTRODUCTION TO PERSONAL STATEMENTS



- Virtually identical for Uni or apprenticeship
- Get over the fact that it sounds cheesy
- It will take 2,3,4,5 redrafts – it is worth it
- Think about what you're up against... THIS COULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR APPLICATION



## What is it?

Explanation of:

WHY you want to study that course?

WHAT skills you have to show that you will be a success

> 4,000 characters

>> About 1 side of typed A4

>> About 4-5 paragraphs

## What is it used for?

UCAS Form includes:

> Some Personal details (address etc)

> Your past grades

> Your predicted grades

> A reference

> Your **Personal Statement**

Used to convince them of the why and the what - and bring all the above together

Used to make a decision on your offer (sometimes on results day)



## DO...

Only share with three members of staff

Follow the guidance and suggested structure

Be prepared to redraft it many times

## DO NOT...

GOOGLE PERSONAL STATEMENTS!!!  
Honestly, it won't help

Copy past personal statements - you will be caught out

Make things up - there's just no need



You don't have to have been captain of the football team, on the school council, have been a form rep, and be an all round american hero!

They want to know:

⇒ You have an **INTEREST** in the subject

⇒ The **SKILLS** to be successful

⇒ The **RESILIENCE** to complete course

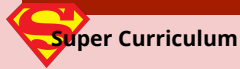
There are a million different ways to show these things



## Paragraph 1

### Why do you want to do the course?

**GEEK OUT!**



- Hardest paragraph by far!
- Doesn't have to be something groundbreaking!!
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## Paragraph 3

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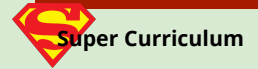
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## Paragraph 2

### What extra have you done?

**GEEK OUT!**



- MOOC
- Insight Lectures
- Taster Days
- University Specialist Days
- EPQ
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### What else can you tell us about you?

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SKILLS,  
SKILLS,  
SKILLS!

# Top **10** Soft Skills

**Strong Work Ethic**

Dependable

**Positive Attitude**

Self Motivated

TEAM ORIENTED

Organized

WORKS WELL UNDER PRESSURE

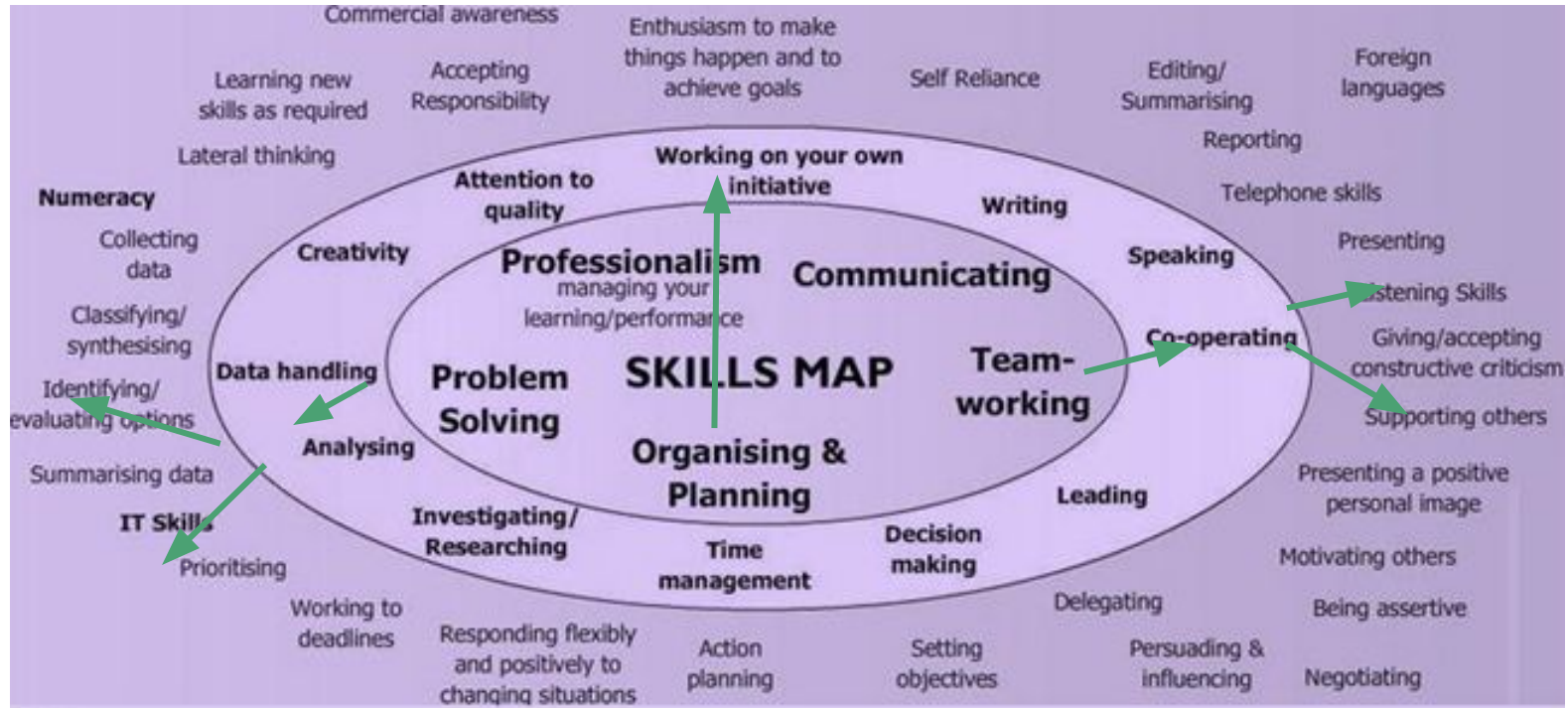
**Effective Communicator**

Flexible

**Confident**



# How to describe your skills



Remember - the inner circles are the overall 'skills' you are developing but you need to be able to explain what you were doing that develops or shows those skills (the outer explanations)

E.g.: "I worked in a team" means nothing unless you can say this involved, for example, "co-operating" with others. In turn, you can explain what co-operating looks like by saying you were "supporting others" or "giving constructive criticism".



## **DRAFTING APPLICATIONS SECTION**

⇒ UK Personal Statement

⇒ Single box layout (as opposed to three sections)



## **EXPLORING PATHWAYS SECTION**

'Know how' Library

→ Personal Statements

→ Example personal statements / guides to writing etc

Subjects Library

→ Search by keyword or subject

Story - 'wish I'd known'

In a nutshell - Graduate salaries/employment

Getting in - Project work

\*\*\*Geek Out - Hot topics / TED talks / Journals / Wider reading - **OPENING PARAGRAPH!**



# VIDEO 2 of 5

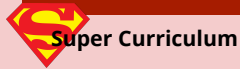
PERSONAL STATEMENT

PARAGRAPH 1 - WHY THIS COURSE

## Paragraph 1

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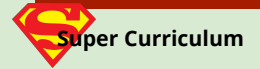
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This is often the paragraph that people find most tricky or difficult to do.

Even if you aren't 100% sure what you want to do yet, or you have a few options, try getting this started with the closest thing you have to a final decision. It's easy to change later, you just need to get started!

Having said that, this doesn't have to be the first paragraph you complete. You could come back to it later and do an easier one first.

That being said, sometimes you need to just put pen to paper and get going!

Let's get started...

There are literally a million ways you can start your personal statement.

Don't worry to have a 'formal' introduction, just jump straight into it...

The KEY is this:

- > Make it personal to you!

- > DON'T say "I have always wanted to..."

(Mainly because you don't have to have always wanted to, and everyone starts like that!)

- > Find the link from you to the course - whatever that may be

A quote from your favourite author or book

An anecdote about something that has happened to you or affected your life

A specific topic you have studied in the subject you are applying for

Something you've read or seen

A future career path you are interested in (may want to save for later)

**GEEK OUT:**

> Hot topic in that area / TED talks

> Wider reading you've done - a journal article



# Some examples...

Mental Health is such a hidden but common illness that people don't acknowledge the fact that many people suffer from it. It is simply not something that is as openly discussed as physical injuries. I first acknowledged this due to growing up with a father who suffers from different mental health issues, which gave me the confidence to come forward and study more about the topic and ultimately seek a career in Nursing to support people like him.

The thought that there are problems and conjectures in maths that do not yet have an answer fascinates me. The Collatz conjecture especially intrigues me. Though it seems simple only having two basic rules. Yet all numbers find themselves in an endless loop of 4, 2 and 1? Why is that? It is problems like this I hope to be able to tackle one day or at least be able to understand the maths behind them.

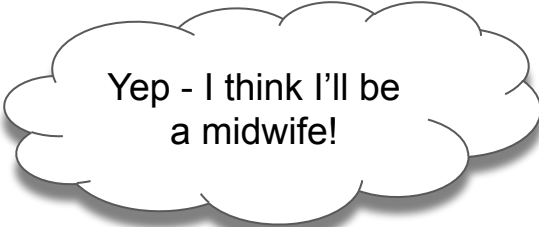
Business has been an ever-present in my life, growing up with my parents and grandparents running their own businesses. This early introduction into the world of business has helped me to become the hardworking, focused and ambitious individual I am and has also played a part in my growing interest of the subject. When I started high school and more recently sixth form my interest and passion for being involved in business has significantly grown, resulting in my long term plan of starting up my own business in the 'free from' food market.

The highlight of my time in sixth form has been the opportunity to attend a long term placement at a local Primary school, where I worked as a teacher assistant. During this time, I had the opportunity to work with different children from ages 3 to 5 with diverse personalities and needs. This placement made me see myself in this career in the future because of my passion to work with children and help their development. I have carefully analysed how the teachers interacted with them on a day-to-day basis to encourage their individual development, which gave me a very good insight of the role I'd like to pursue.

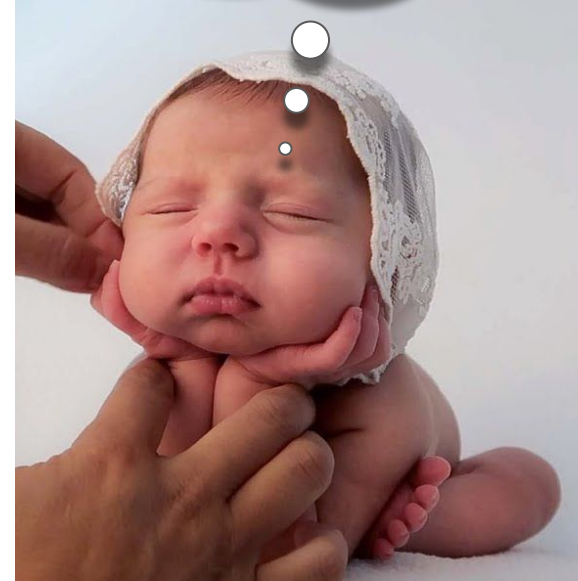


# What do they have in common?

- > Not the grandest gestures in the world...SINCE BEING BORN I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO...!
- > Personal, unique, clear - you instantly know what they are applying for and **why**.
- > None of these were written perfectly first time (often start as second paragraphs once people have 'relaxed' into it a little)
- > They are interesting, a bit different, and they are TRUE!



Yep - I think I'll be a midwife!





# VIDEO 3 of 5

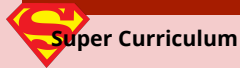
PERSONAL STATEMENT

PARAGRAPH 2 - WHAT EXTRA HAVE YOU DONE?

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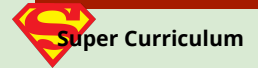
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## Paragraph 2 - What extra have you done?

How else can you show an INTEREST in the subject - where have you gone further to make sure that you know you want to study this?

⇒ Gives you a chance to really set yourself apart from others



Have you just picked the subject because you like the teacher at A level and can't think of anything else?

Or have you gone the extra mile?

Checked out things outside of your A level spec?

Read something that sparked further interest?



# Paragraph 2 - What extra have you done?



EPQ - Best POSSIBLE thing you could write about

> Work as an undergraduate already - research, work independently, reference, form coherent arguments etc etc

Next best thing...MOOC!

> Written by Universities. Shows your independent, interested, motivated...like **learning!**  
(Let's face it - you've got plenty of time to do one of these!)

## Work Experience

Focus on the **skills** rather than the actual content. So even if it doesn't directly relate to what you want to do in the future, you will still have developed important transferrable skills



## GEEK OUT!

Hot topics / TED talks / Journals / Wider reading

This is the time to show your wider interest in the subject

Be overt about it: "I order to develop my knowledge more in preparation for degree study..."

[LINK TO CAMBRIDGE UNI "SUPER CURRICULUM" SUGGESTIONS](#)





# VIDEO 4 of 5

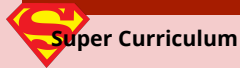
PERSONAL STATEMENT

PARAGRAPH 3 - ACADEMIC PARAGRAPH

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### Academic Paragraph

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This is simple:

- > Relate your current subjects to your degree
- > Again - not so much about content, as it is about SKILLS!

- ⇒ They don't want to know about the specification, or a list of topics that you have covered
- ⇒ It's about how each subject has prepared you for your degree
- ⇒ Where you study on one overall subject, like Health, you could talk about **one or two** specific units that link, for example, to Nursing (e.g. Communication, safeguarding, use of medication etc). You still need to explain general skills as well

MATCH your skills to the degree...

Do they want analytical skills? Research skills? Independence? Understanding complex theories? Mathematical skills? Essay writing? Practical understanding? Team work? Field work?

The list is endless...



## Paragraph 3 - Academic paragraph

Studying Sociology contributes to my learning because it helps me to understand the needs, norms and values of society and how this impacts on the business world as well as a unit based on corporate crimes which clearly outlines the regulations businesses have to follow. English Literature helps me to develop my analytical skills making analysing case studies and financial data easier. As well as studying business in lessons, one of the things I have always used to enhance my knowledge of business and current affairs is to keep up to date with the daily news through mobile phone applications and websites. This has been especially useful in class as I am able to apply these articles in lessons and discuss them with my peers.

Studying Religious Studies at A level has given me the chance to develop my critical thinking; a skill that I know is useful for this course. This core skill is necessary for producing judgments that are free from personal bias. I believe that I am a naturally curious and open-minded person but through my academic subjects I have learned to analyse and evaluate issues easily in order to reach a conclusion. Furthermore, Psychology has deepened my interest in people and the impact our environment can have on an individual. Public policies and social institutions have a pivotal impact on a person's social, cognitive and emotional welfare. The environment that we live in is governed by current political and social matters and is therefore intrinsically linked to Psychology. English Literature has provided me with sound written and oral communication skills. It has also given me the opportunity to explore texts which are relevant to this course. Political and social protest was the overarching theme of the literature that I studied in year twelve. This gave me a good understanding of a range of political issues and allowed me to build my own personal opinions on them.

I am currently studying Level 3 Health and Social Care, which I chose to support the academic side of my decision to be a nurse. Studying a coursework heavy subject alongside having a part time job, and my position as a lunchtime supervisor, has meant I have to be organised with the ability to prioritise my time and meet strict deadlines. I am able to do this well while always maintaining the highest standards possible in everything I do. Health and Social care has given me an excellent starting point when it comes to looking at a career in nursing. For example modules in safeguarding and mental health has shown me the importance of looking after the most vulnerable in our society, and given an understanding of both confidentiality and transparency while doing so.



# VIDEO 5 of 5

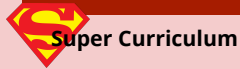
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PARAGRAPH - 4 EXTRAS & SUMMARY

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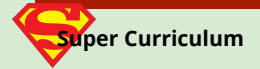
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- > Try not to fit everything possible like one long list!
- > You are better off having two things that are explained well, rather than 5 rushed things that read like a quick list.
- > Try making a list first of all the *possible* things you could write about, and then pick your top 2
- \*\* If you don't have room for something that you really want mentioning - that can go in your reference - just ask for it to be put in!



**“WHAT’S  
IT ALL  
ABOUT?”**

This paragraph is all about showing you have the right SKILLS!

So the **what** is far less important - it’s the skills you developed from doing the things you have talked about!

Some options:

Extra curricular: (Sport / Music / Drama / Horse Riding / Climbing / Swimming...)

Volunteering: (Duke of Edinburgh / Scouts, guides / other volunteering)

Work Experience: (Part time job / School work experience not mentioned above)

*Anything else not mentioned above - Awards, hobbies, interests...anything you think is relevant!*

SKILLS,  
SKILLS,  
SKILLS!

# Top **10** Soft Skills

**Strong Work Ethic**

Dependable

**Positive Attitude**

Self Motivated

TEAM ORIENTED

Organized

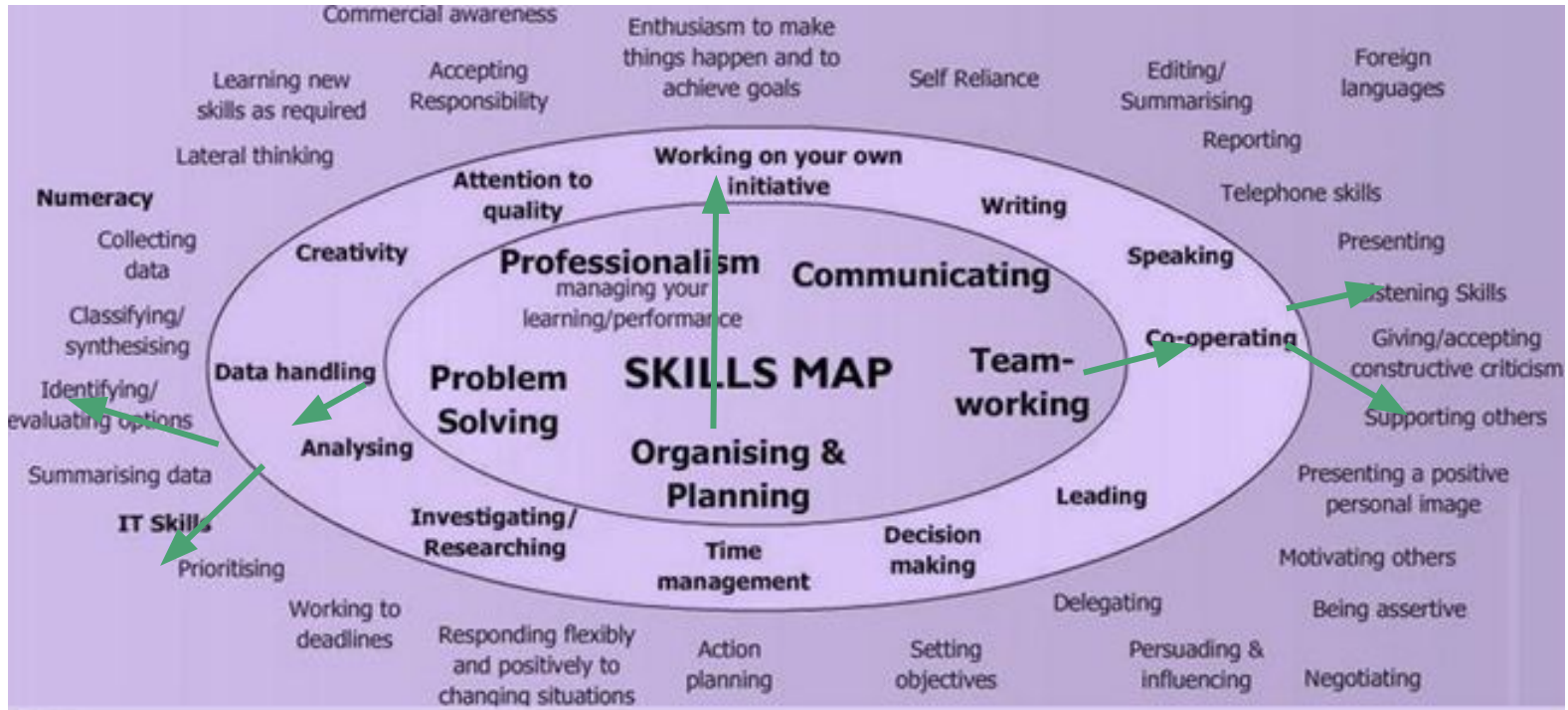
WORKS WELL UNDER PRESSURE

**Effective Communicator**

Flexible

**Confident**

# How to describe your skills



Remember - the inner circles are the overall 'skills' you are developing but you need to be able to explain what you were doing that develops or shows those skills (the outer explanations)

E.g.: "I worked in a team" means nothing unless you can say this involved, for example, "co-operating" with others. In turn, you can explain what co-operating looks like by saying you were "supporting others" or "giving constructive criticism".



# Personal Statements

- It will take 2,3,4,5 redrafts – it is worth it
- Think about what you're up against... THIS COULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR APPLICATION
- In actual fact, just about anything could go in any paragraph...but you need a structure to be able to move things around in it
- I will share a selection of [past personal statements](#) for you to take inspiration from (not copy!)



You just have to get get started and give it a go otherwise it will sit at the side like a burden that you are desperately trying to forget...

Happy writing!