How To Write a Personal Statement

Applying for college or university?
This guide has been created to help you write the perfect personal statement!

futurehy

Hello!

Hello, we are FutureHY York and North Yorkshire. We are part of the OfS Uni Connect partnership, and our aim is to support young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education.
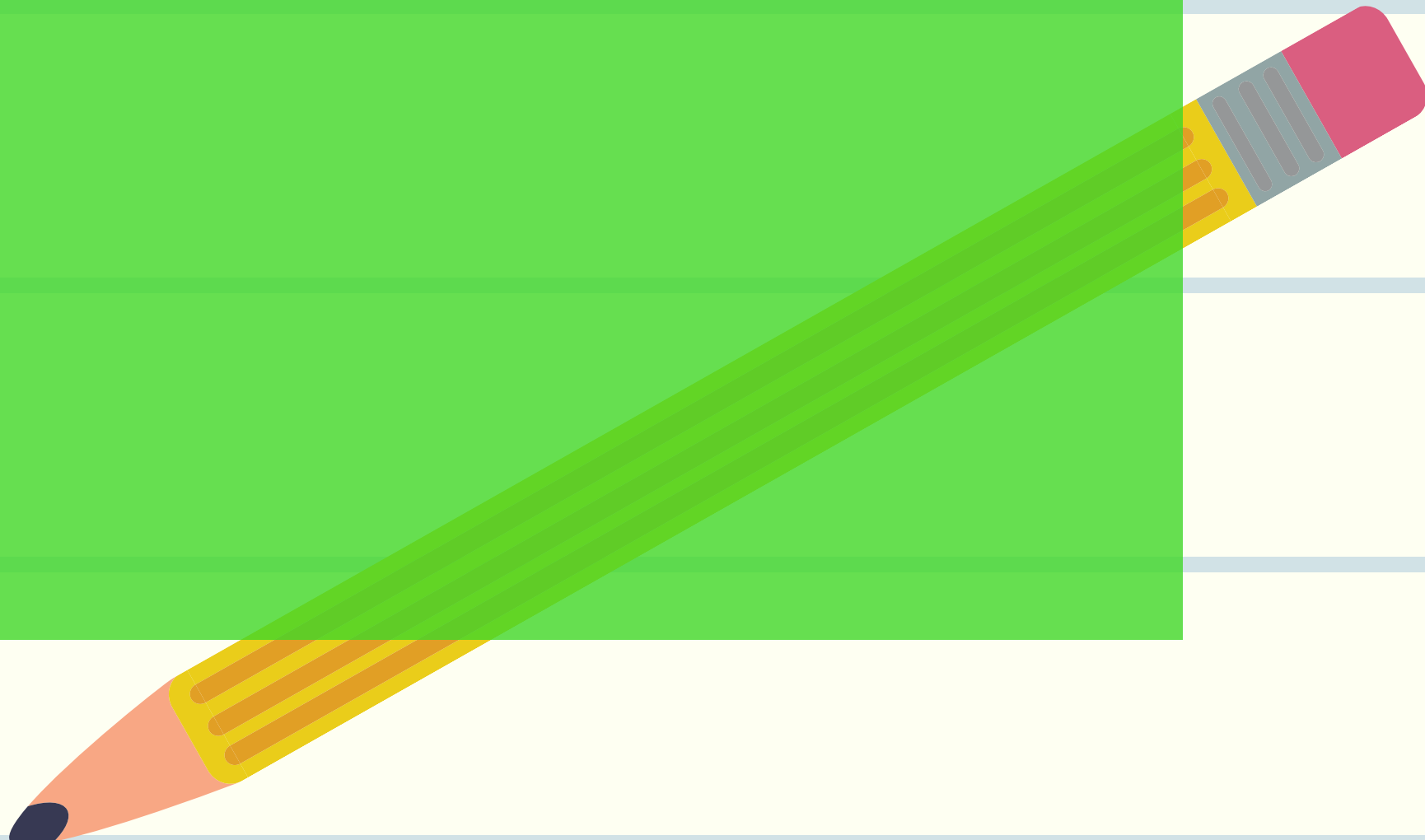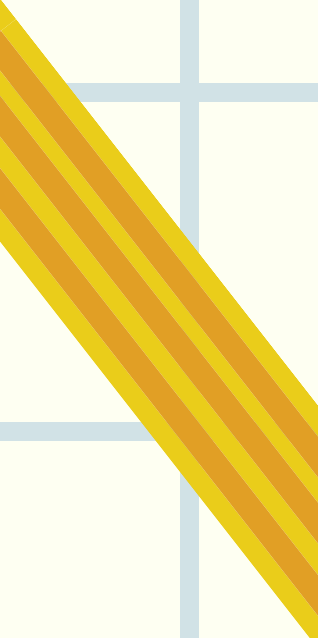
We have created this short guide to help you write your personal statement when applying to college or university.

We hope you find it useful!
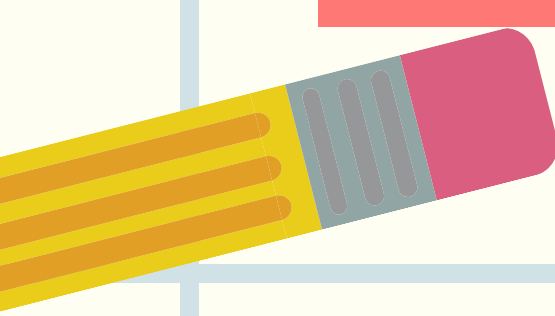
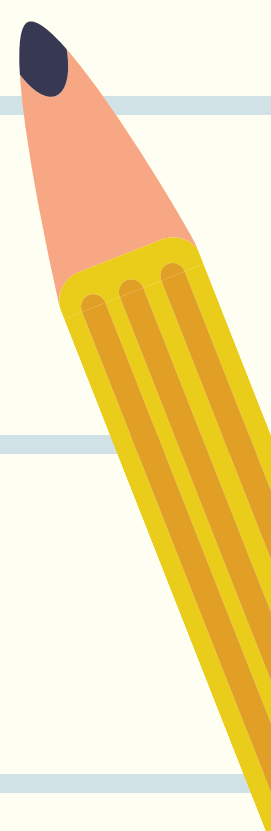# What is a Personal Statement?

A personal statement is a supporting document which goes alongside your application for university or college. As the name suggests, a personal statement is 'personal'; it gives you the opportunity to say a little about yourself and why you wish to study your chosen subject.

What To Include

A personal statement should summarise why you are an excellent candidate to study at that particular college or university. It is a good idea to look at the course details and requirements so you can make links when writing your personal statement.

However, if applying through UCAS, it is important to consider that you can only submit one personal statement for all courses (if applying for more than one course), therefore you need to make your personal statement non-biased and applicable to all courses. Do not include the names of courses or institutions and do not indicate your preferred choice.

What To Include - Skills

When writing your personal statement, think about the skills that make you a great candidate. These could relate to the course directly, for example 'debating skills' would be directly suited to a philosophy and ethics course. On the other hand, it is also important to consider transferrable skills which are more generic and are useful, not only for your chosen course, but for everyday life. An example of a transferrable skill could be 'communication skills'.

What To Include - Experience

To demonstrate that you have used your skills in practice, include any experiences relevant to the course. For example, you may have done some volunteering in the past. Even if this isn't directly related to your course, you can still highlight the transferrable skills and qualities demonstrated through this such as time-keeping, reliability and enthusiasm. If you have achieved any awards, these are also worth mentioning, for example, gaining the Duke of Edinburgh award demonstrates resilience and determination.
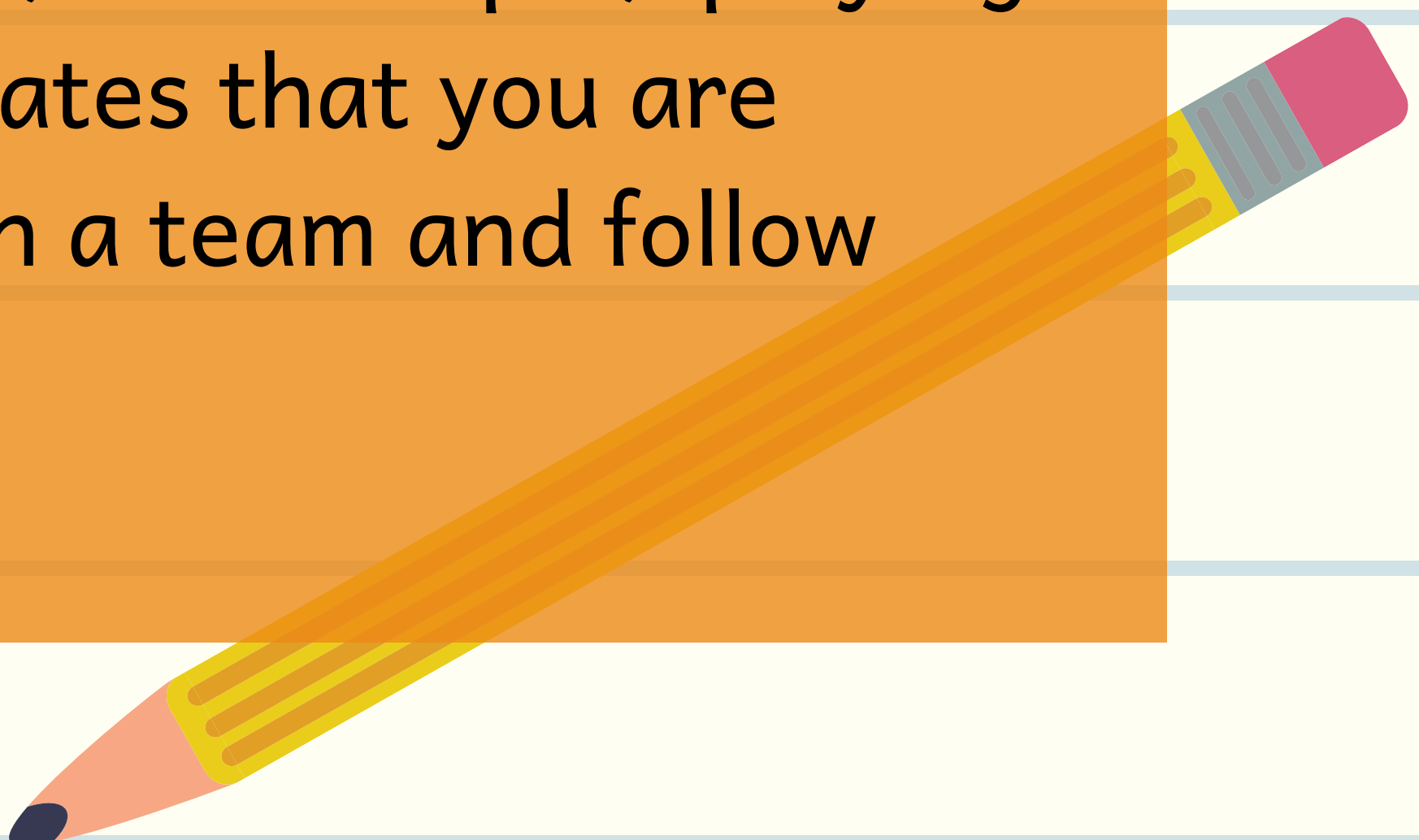
What To Include - Make it Personal

To make your personal statement 'personal', explain why you are applying for the course and what you hope to achieve from it. Talk about your passions, ambitions, and why you are applying for that particular course; this will make your personal statement more interesting and individual.

Mentioning hobbies and interests also adds a personal touch. Not only does it make your personal statement more engaging, it also highlights additional transferrable skills, for example, 'playing football' demonstrates that you are able to work well in a team and follow instructions.
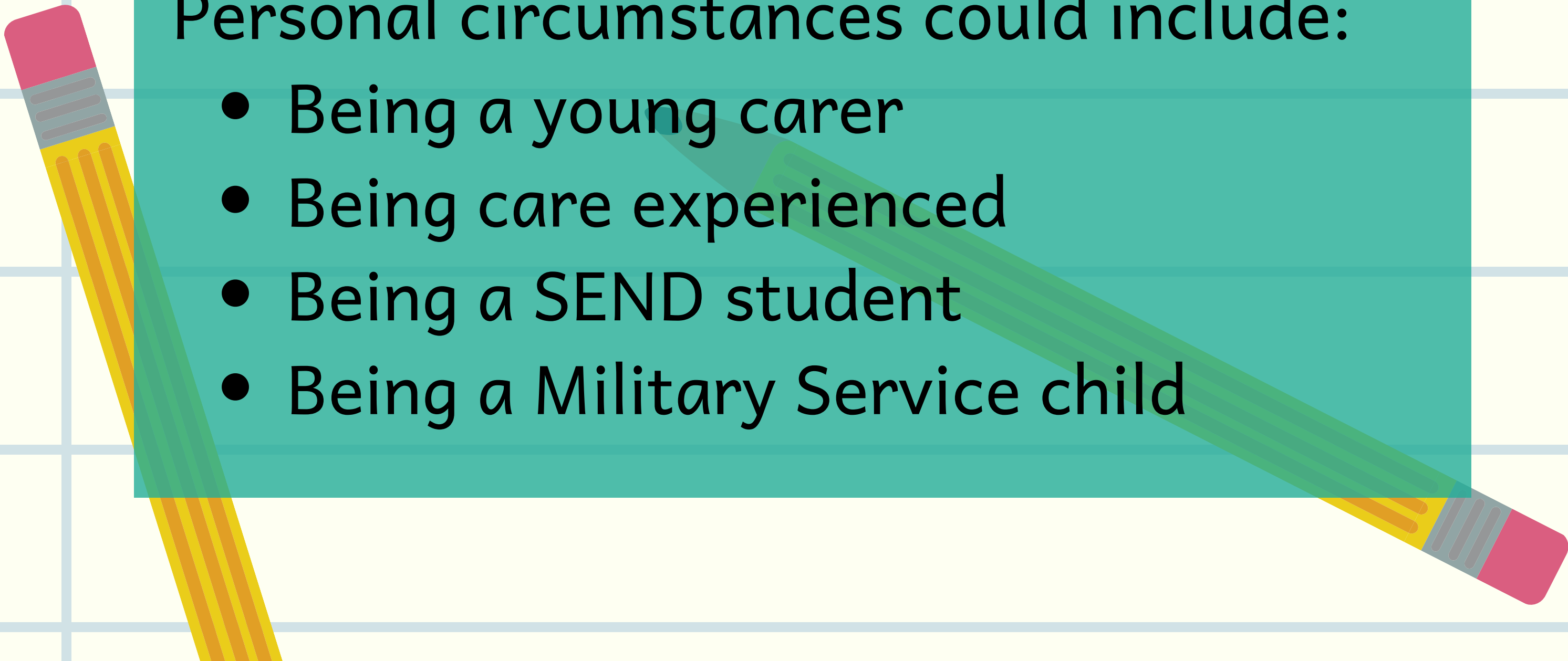
What To Include - Personal Circumstances

If you have experienced any personal circumstances which have affected your education, it is a good idea to mention them in your personal statement, for example, a long-term illness or disability may have resulted in extended periods of absence from school or college. Also, if your parents are in the military services, moving around during your childhood may have disrupted your education.
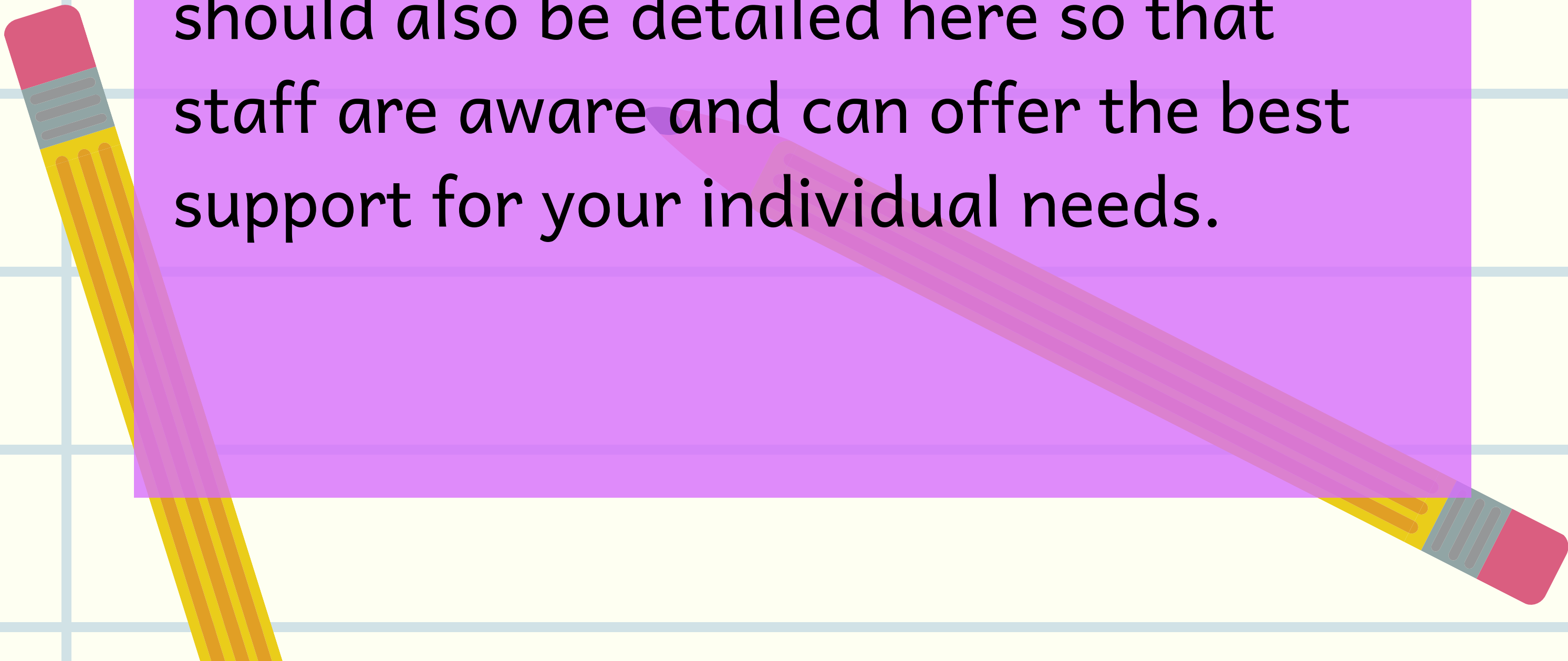
Personal circumstances could include:
- Being a young carer
- Being care experienced
- Being a SEND student
- Being a Military Service child

What To Include - Bursaries And Support

It is also worth mentioning any financial hardships or if you have received any bursaries so that the university/college can continue to support you. Additional funding may be offered to certain groups of students such as young carers or looked after young people, therefore it is worth enquiring if you think you may be eligible.

If you require additional support, this should also be detailed here so that staff are aware and can offer the best support for your individual needs.
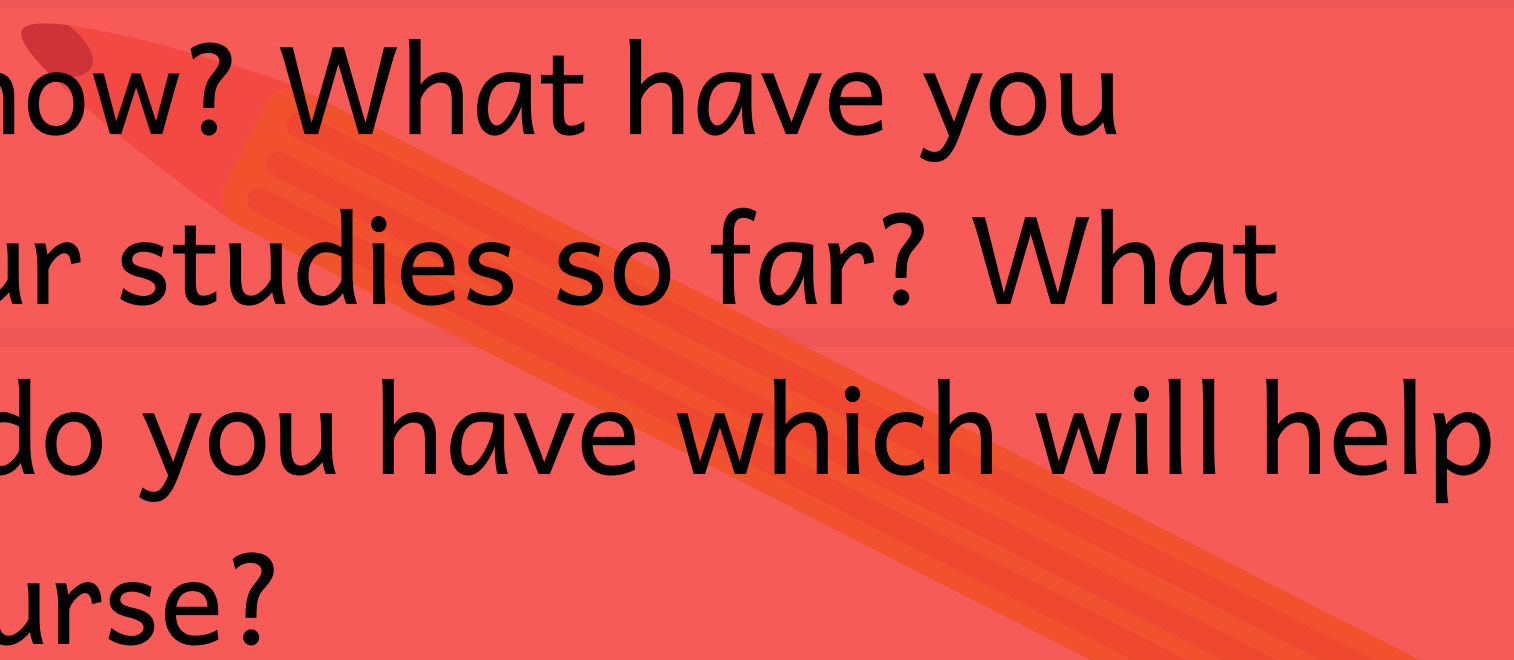
Structuring Your Personal Statement

There is no set structure for a personal statement, however, you could use the following five sections to help create a basic structure to your statement.

1) Introduction and Motivation – introduce yourself, what makes you a great student? What has motivated you to study this particular course? Why do you want to study at this particular college/university?

2) Skills and Knowledge – how have your past/current studies helped you get to where you are now? What have you gained from your studies so far? What skills/qualities do you have which will help you with the course?
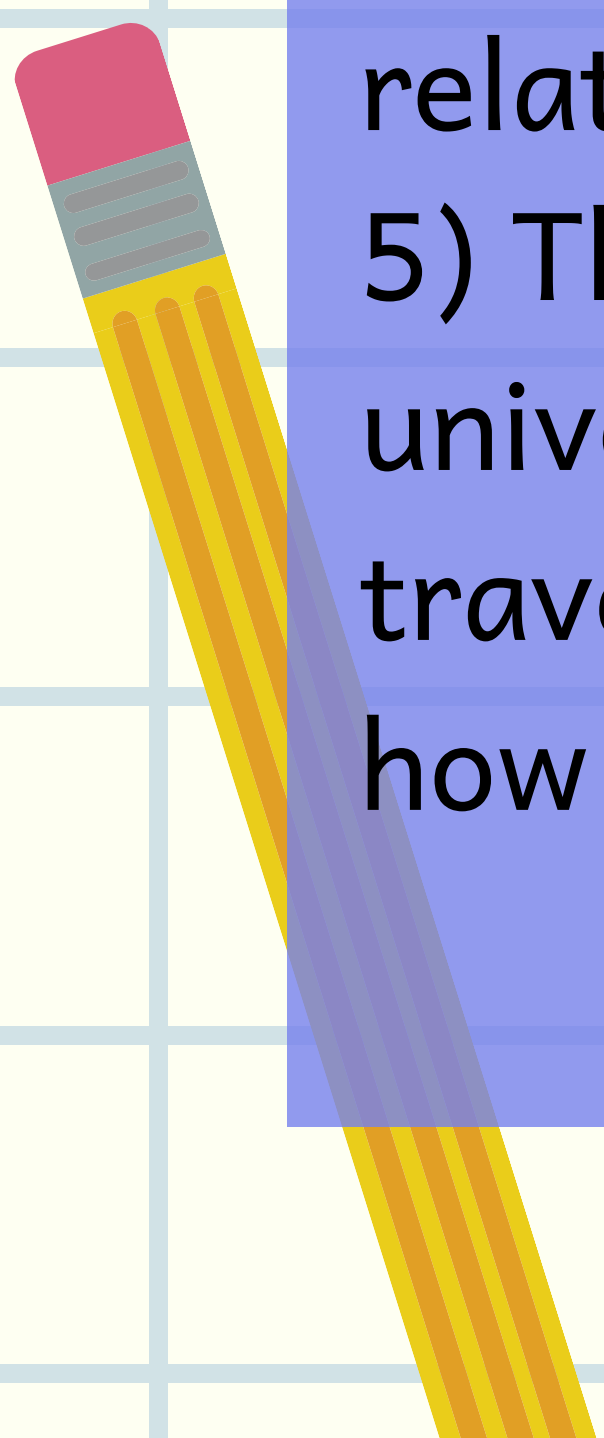
Structuring Your Personal Statement - Continued...

3) Experiences – have you done any work experience or volunteering and, if so, what did you gain from this? What are your hobbies/interests and how do they demonstrate transferrable skills?

4) Research – can you demonstrate that you have researched the course subject? Do you keep up with current affairs and, if so, how? What influences do you have relating to the course subject?

5) The Future – what is your future after university (employment, further study, travel)? What is your dream career and how will the course help you achieve it?

Word Count

It is recommended that a UCAS personal statement does not exceed 4,000 characters (approximately 500 words). This may seem like a lot, however it roughly equates to one side of A4 paper. This is why it is important to keep your personal statement concise and focused so you don't go off track and exceed your word count. Once you have written your personal statement it is really important to ask someone to check it over for you. Even if you think it is perfect, it is likely that you have read over it numerous times yourself and may be unable to spot small grammatical errors or spelling mistakes.

How Long Will It Take?

It is best to give yourself as much time as possible to write your personal statement so you then have time to think and go back over it to make any necessary changes before the deadline. Try to give yourself at least a few weeks to write it so you don't panic and rush it.

Draft your personal statement on a Word document first (this will allow you to monitor your word count).

Make sure you save any changes regularly so you don't lose anything.

Once you are finished and happy with your personal statement, copy and paste it into your UCAS application and you're done!

Useful Resources

We hope that you have found this guide helpful, good luck!

For more useful resources try visiting the following websites:

futurehy.co.uk

www.ucas.com

www.targetcareers.co.uk

www.prospects.ac.uk