Personal Statement Examples

# Maths

The idea of proof has always held a real fascination for me. The process of starting from a simple set of axioms and deriving almost any mathematical truth (putting Godel to one side) is what truly separates Mathematics from any other subject. It is the closest we can ever get to absolute truth, and therein lies its sheer beauty and the reason it is the only subject for me. Of course, it's also a good deal of fun.

I have tried to extend my Maths as much as possible beyond the classroom, and whenever I do so I uncover either some completely new and intriguing area of Mathematics or a very neat trick I hadn't thought of in more familiar territory. One example of this is my attendance at weekly lectures given by the department of Mathematics at Bristol University, covering topics from the Mathematics of juggling to quantum mechanics, although some of my favourites have been those on the less exotic "inequalities", which taught me a lot about thinking about problems creatively. I also attended a summer school run by the National Academy of Gifted and Talented Youth at the University of Durham, where I spent two weeks being introduced to various approachable first year undergraduate topics such as proof by induction, Markov chains and using Maple. This experience not only allowed me to discover areas of Mathematics I would not otherwise have encountered, but also gave me a small taste of university life, as there was a large number of us living in one of the colleges. I am also involved in the UKMT mentoring scheme, whereby each month I am given a sheet of questions in areas not touched on at A level, such as geometry and number theory, giving me a good opportunity to explore new mathematical ideas myself, and gain a much deeper appreciation of the interconnections within Mathematics and the creation of proofs. I am a member of the school's Maths team and we are regularly successful in competing against teams from other schools in the area. I also attend STEP sessions at local schools when available, as I find the questions much more interesting than the standard A level ones, and thinking about how to solve them has greatly improved my rigour in approaching problems.

Among the mathematical books I have read, I enjoyed "Godel, Escher, Bach", which gives a good grounding in axiomatic reasoning and formal systems, whilst at the same time pointing out their major flaw. I also liked "To infinity and beyond" by Eli Maor, which deals with the concept of infinity, its implications and its paradoxes, both in Maths and elsewhere.

I particularly enjoy the pure side of the A level syllabus, especially trigonometry and calculus, as they involve a certain degree of proof and introduce new concepts. I believe my other academic subjects all complement Mathematics as they are about finding ways of describing reality, be it through language in French or through equations and models in Physics and Chemistry. I find Critical Thinking especially relevant as it is about the construction of sound logical arguments, an art lying at the heart of Mathematics in proof. I have achieved an A grade in all modules across all my subjects.

In my spare time, I practise kickboxing, and have competed in various local competitions. As a volunteer, I am involved in a year seven Maths mentoring scheme and help at a homeless shelter. I enjoy travelling, and will be going to Nicaragua for a month after my A levels to help in a small village, explore the local jungles and volcanoes and practise my Spanish. I lived in France from the ages of 9 to 12, and learnt to adapt to a new language and culture.

I very much look forward to exploring the new ideas of University level Mathematics, and playing a full part in University life.

# Medicine

From an early age I have been fascinated by the workings of life. The human body is a remarkable machine with many diverse systems producing an organism that could never be artificially reproduced. My love of science is just one of my reasons for choosing medicine. I enjoy a challenge particularly towards a rewarding objective and although medicine is a tough career it can be enormously gratifying, highlighted by the doctors I have spoken to during my experience and on a personal level.

To further my insight into the medical field I participated in a work shadowing week at a GP surgery. I gained a valuable understanding of the workings of the surgery, with opportunities to observe and speak to the doctors regarding a medical career. I arranged another placement week myself at a local hospital, which was a superb opportunity to observe medicine from another point of view. I observed the ward rounds, an MRI scan, a skin biopsy and an endosocpy clinic all which I found interesting. I spent the most time with the haematology team, responsible for patients with diseases such as Chronic Myelogenous Leukaemia (CML), haematology being one of my interests it was captivating that I could see the specialty from a more complex side than the AS biology course. For example I was able to understand how the level of platelets affects blood clotting. Throughout the week I expanded my confidence and communication skills through speaking to patients and doctors. Although I enjoyed the week it was at times extremely heart-rending, I was able to get close to many of the terminally ill patients helping and caring for them where I could, getting them tea or just talking and empathising with them to build their spirits. I volunteered at a local home for the elderly which was very rewarding as I built my caring skills, helping residents by making them tea or playing cards with them. At school I took part in a paired reading scheme for 6 months where I was able to help young children to read, speaking and listening to them to help their English. All my experience has made me more determined to accomplish my ambition to be a doctor.

My love of science and aspiration for a medical career is reflected in my A-Level choices where good time management, self motivated study skills and ability to cope with stress and pressure are essential. Biology and chemistry have helped me further my interest and develop my analytical skills, maths helps my problem solving skills helping me to work logically and ICT gives me a valuable insight into the rapidly developing technological world where computers are crucial. I believe all the qualities I have developed through my courses are essential for any good doctor.

I have participated in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme which enabled me to achieve a first aid certificate including cardiopulmonary resuscitation training. I also enhanced my inter-personal, communication and team building abilities, valuable skills for any medical occupation, as I witnessed during my experience. For 2 years I have volunteered at a local vet hospital observing and helping out 2 hours per week communicating with the public in a different environment. I enjoy reading, mainly factual books to expand my general knowledge. To relax, I enjoy sports including football, and cricket for which I was captain of the school team and my local team for the past 3 years improving my leadership skills. I also recently rekindled my childhood passion for golf, another pastime I enjoy even if it is a little expensive!

I am a self motivated, determined individual and I look forward to the social and academic challenges of university. I am aware of the demands of a medical career but my commitment and desire to become a doctor has only been strengthened through my experience and work in a voluntary capacity.

# Economics

Examination of any quality newspaper will probably demonstrate that more of the headlines address economic problems than any other topic. The importance and relevance of economic related disciplines to the modern world have led me to want to pursue the study of the subject at a higher level. I am particularly interested in the behaviour of firms and organisations from an economic point of view and I have based my A-level coursework in this field. During my study, I have come across many real life complexities and while attempting to explain these theories, I have developed a keen interest in analysing and understanding how the world of business is influenced by economics.

I have created an economics revision website for A-level and GCSE students. It is primarily intended to help younger students gain an understanding of core economic principles but has also helped me improve my own computer and presentational skills. I regularly read newspapers and economic publications to keep up to date with economic developments and I am able to use my mathematical and analytical skills to apply different economic theories to a range of real-life economic situations.

Last year, I took part in an economics and business project called Young Enterprise in which I set up a small company and sold products to students at our school. I enjoyed the chance to put some of my business economic theory into practice and was able to enhance my management and communication skills. I also gained a distinction in the associated exam.

To gain practical experience in the workplace, I worked for two weeks at a small software company specialising in financial software. I currently have a part time job and this has taught me much about teamwork, responsibility and time management in the workplace.

In my spare time, I enjoy reading, swimming, sketching and solving puzzles and logic problems. I have redesigned and been responsible for the maintenance of my school’s website.

I believe that I will gain a highly marketable set of skills from the study of economics at university. I have found economics to be a challenging and diverse discipline and I am interested in both macro and micro economics. It is this variation of perspective, combined with its real world importance, that makes economics an appealing subject to study at university.

# History

Growing up in London, I have been exposed to the city’s history from a very young age. While appreciating the myriad historical eras that have shaped the development of London, it is the Victorian era that fascinates me the most. Throughout this period of significant change, from the Industrial Revolution to the suffrage movement, London has incessantly remained at the centre of history. Recently I have developed a particular interest in how changes such as the decline of the Liberal party and the rise of the Labour party have deeply rooted themselves in our society, and continue to be felt in our political system today. In this way history has shaped contemporary life and continues to mould, influence and develop it. My affinity with the Victorians reached its fullest this year when I studied 19th and early 20th century British politics. As such, the study of History has opened up my eyes to the textures and contours of society as we see it today, allowing me a greater understanding of contemporary issues.

History holds a unifying thread in all the subjects I study at A Level. My pursuit of English Literature is driven by my love of Classical works, which are not only interesting and engaging, but also facilitate my thirst for knowledge of the contrasting characteristics of earlier societies. Through studying Philosophy and Ethics I have learned how to structure a coherent and consistent argument which is essential in the study of history. I particularly enjoy the synoptic unit of A2 history in which I combine my use of historical sources and historical explanations as well as looking at the historical significance and the role of interpretations in history. Each lesson is set up as a mini ‘tutorial’ which allows me to exercise my independent learning skills. This assignment also allows me to work on a personal area of interest as I have chosen the controversial topic of the historiography of the French Revolution. The Revolution is considered vital as it marked the beginnings of social justice in France, and provides an interesting comparison to progress in social justice in the UK. To broaden my understanding, I ventured to the British Library, looking through the archives and researching my chosen topic. Research is one of my favourite elements of history. I have acknowledged the fact that history is heavily weighted to reading and the acquiring of information. I can confidently say that I do not consider this as an obstacle or a challenge as I enjoy reading and assimilating ideas. Since starting sixth form, I have started reading academic articles from History Today and Modern History Today. I particularly enjoy these articles as they challenge my thinking and most offer different interpretations about periods of history.

My fervour for History at a higher level was particularly apparent in my AS year when I was awarded the History Student Award for outstanding achievement and progress throughout the year. Furthermore, I was also chosen as a History ambassador for which I represented my school on the ‘Lessons at Auschwitz’ field trip to the Nazi death camps in Auschwitz, Poland. This opportunity allowed me to experience history first hand. Being able to visit the death camps that had such an immense influence on humanity allowed me to reflect on how the past has shaped and structured contemporary society.

During the summer of 2013 I completed a six week internship at BP, during which I worked closely with highly accomplished members of the oil trading team. My work placement allowed me to pick up the key transferable skills that I was seeking. At the end of a vigorous six weeks I gained skills such as independent research across regular and bespoke systems, analytical skills and team working skills all of which I will utilise throughout my History degree. Studying History at university will further my knowledge as there are so many avenues that I have yet to explore and I hope that university will fill in these gaps in my knowledge.

# Law

My work experience has been key to my choice to study Law. This in combination with my A-Levels, has allowed me to develop academic rigour with a strong spirit of enquiry and advocacy. I have worked with different types of legal professionals and dealt with important institutions during my gap year. Contemporary Law requires problem solving as part of a team to produce an effective justice system, and will provide me with the opportunities that I am seeking.

I have explored various Legal professions by shadowing professionals and working within a Legal environment. I will further enhance my experience by shadowing the resident Judge of Lewes Crown Court in January. I regularly attend County and Magistrate Courts, providing me with valuable insights into legal career options and the workings of a busy town Court. I was particularly interested by the wide range of organisations and individuals involved in the implementation of the legal system and was inspired by the breadth of possibilities for those interested in a legal career. I gained awareness of the variability of Legal provision whilst shadowing Solicitors, Barristers and Magistrates. I am aware that the nature of Legal work in a small town will differ greatly from that in cities and am intrigued to see that difference for myself. I hope that my upcoming time with a Judge may begin to provide me with such an insight. However, I have not only investigated the practical side of Law but also the theoretical. I am currently reading through various supporting texts, and have sat in on some lectures, enhancing my interest in the subject.

I am currently a member of Millennium Volunteers and Amnesty International. I have also applied to volunteer with the Witness Support Charity. I feel strongly about the rights and welfare of people, particularly those of people who struggle to make their own voices heard. Whilst the majority of my volunteer work has arisen since my turning 18, the reasoning behind my volunteering has long been with me. The difficulties in providing a safe and effective Justice system which overcomes societal barriers are compounded by the realities of dealing with a large institution like the Magistracy.

During my A-levels I studied a range of subjects across the arts-science divide. I was determined not to pigeon-hole myself within a single mode of thinking. The different problem-solving responses required by these subjects are fascinating, and I feel that the ability to synthesise some of these could be of great benefit. I have really enjoyed studying such varied topics, and I hope to bring this breadth of experience to my legal studies.

I have suffered from Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis since the age of 13. I have maintained as normal a life as possible, but it has had implications. Whilst I have still achieved very respectable grades, I was disappointed by my GCSE and A-Level results not being evidence of my potential. I feel this to have been a direct result of my illness and its ramifications. I hope that University will open a new chapter with regards to my health, with new treatments being more and more sophisticated. I deeply wish to be given the opportunity to reach my potential in the future.

At school I sung for the school choir and participated in sports teams until my health required me to stop, helped with duties in my house, including looking out for younger students and contributed to some of the school articles. The pastoral aspect of school was important to me, and at University I hope to become engaged with that further. I have been involved in the school debating team, represented my school in the local Model U.N. General Assembly and am a member of NAGTY. Public speaking is a challenge that I find both exciting and terrifying, and one that I am certainly interested in tackling further. My previous experiences led to my choice to study Law and I am hoping to have the opportunity to take advantage of them in the future.

# Physics

Physics is, by definition, the study of light and matter in the universe and how they interact. I struggle to recall a more elegantly simple statement from any of my studies. What interests me, however, is the complexity and challenge involved in becoming enlightened on such topics. Throughout my academic career I have been fascinated by the intricate and complex interactions between light and matter, and how these can be perceived in the real world. I hope that, by studying physics, I can attempt to understand and continue to wonder at the workings of our universe.

I have had much success academically. The quality and breadth of my grades indicate my passion and adaptability for learning across all areas. I decided to study five subjects at AS level to continue my development in a variety of skills that will facilitate physics at a higher level, from detailed analysis to extended writing, as well as demonstrating my commitment to learning. My attainment of over 95% in Physics, Maths and Further Maths demonstrates my commitment to my studies and my ability to effectively deal with large workloads. Studying five subjects also provided me with aspects of both the sciences and humanities helping to develop my skills as a well-rounded academic. My choice to study further mathematics also reflects a commitment to gain the level of mathematical proficiency required for university study.

Aware of the limitations of college study, I am always keen to extend my understanding of physics. Using MIT OpenCourseware, I am participating in online university classes for calculus and physics. I undertake wider reading as part of my enrichment, covering a variety of topics, especially in cosmology and astrophysics. *A Brief History of Time* is a favourite of mine, in the way it brings together ideas from quantum and particle physics to explain such a dramatic phenomenon as black hole formation. The elegant symmetry of special relativity when describing constant velocity motion from separate perspectives, though initially counter-intuitive given classical physics, is interesting, especially in the process of its derivation given the constant velocity of light and principle of relativity.

I am involved in a range of enrichment programmes, such as an Extended Project, assessing the feasibility of future travel to Mars and Proxima Centauri. As well as extending my knowledge of this aspect of applied Physics, the project was also useful in a wider sense, developing skills in research and academic writing.

I have also been involved in the Engineering Education Scheme, working with professional engineers from Boot’s Pharmaceuticals. This involved a six month project, examining ways to improve the efficiency of Boots’ industrial cooling systems. This gave me invaluable experience of applying physical principles learned during my studies of Physics to real world problems, as well as expanding my knowledge into new areas such as fluid dynamics. Through my work during the scheme, I was able to complete a week long work experience placement at the Boot’s engineering department, where analysis of efficiencies I produced was used in presentation to company executives.

I enjoy a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, from regularly camping and walking as part of the Scout Association and the Silver Duke of Edinburgh award, to playing in a variety of musical ensembles from Brass Band to Ska Band! For a period of six years I wrote a monthly column in a local magazine distributed to 5,000 households, which I feel demonstrates my commitment, ability to work to strict deadlines, and versatility. These activities help to develop wider, more socially oriented skills which cannot be taught, such as team work, flexibility and confidence.

I feel that my skills and passion make me an ideal candidate to study Physics at a degree level, as I have both the academic ability to gain the knowledge required, and the interest to develop a deep passion for the subject.