

Target

Making a statement

While hard work is certainly required to gain entry to a university or institute of higher learning, what you are able to say about yourself and your personal development is equally important. Getting good grades is one thing, but awareness of how extra-curricular experiences have shaped you is invaluable to your progression in the big, wide world

WITH so many students getting excellent grades on their HKDSEs and assorted standardised tests, as well as participating in a laundry list of extra-curricular activities, it is getting progressively more difficult for applicants to differentiate themselves from the competition. That is where the humble personal statement comes into play. Known as the SLP Self-Account, a personal statement is a piece of writing that allows you to tell the universities you are applying to why they

should offer you a place on their course.

After all, as they evaluate students for admission, universities have several questions that cannot be answered by looking at your grades alone. You must demonstrate genuine passion, a thirst for learning, maturity, an ability to reflect, and critical thinking in your personal statement. Here is how you can write one that accomplishes all these things effectively.

Step 1: Recall

FIRST, jot down all your relevant experiences over the course of the last three years of your secondary school career. This includes awards and academic recognition you may have received; extra qualifications, such as certificates from accredited institutions, and any extra research also counts. Do not forget to list non-academic activities! Universities like to see that you are a well-rounded person. This means referring to any after-school activities you may have joined, especially any leadership positions you may have held; work and volunteering experiences are important to note too. In short, think about your growth over the past couple of years.

Step 2: Relate and elaborate!

MANY students neglect to stop and think about the stuff they have actually done, leading them to write about experiences that may not have necessarily contributed to their growth as individuals. It is now time for you to select experiences that have done so. Provide details of said

experiences, while also linking them to discipline-specific skills and reflections you have on the subject. For example, after volunteering at a rehabilitation centre for the mentally disabled, you might have gained a sense of social justice as well as an awareness of current issues surrounding the legal rights of these patients, which are important qualities for a potential law student.

Be specific when elaborating on the experiences you have had; focus on the quality, instead of the quantity, of past accolades. Universities prefer understanding how a specific event led you to the discipline you are applying for, rather than being bombarded by a list of awards that other candidates also have accumulated.

Step 3: Edit

ALWAYS remember to edit your work. The ABCs of editing are thus: Active verbs, Brevity, and Care. Use active words, that imply your pro-activeness in furthering your growth. For example, write "I volunteered" instead of "I did volunteering". Always provide evidence, and try to cut down on excessively flowery language. Proofread, proofread, proofread, and always ask people to read through your personal statement for a fresh perspective on your work.

With these pointers in mind, you will be able to show your dream universities that you have more than the basic prerequisites to succeed, not only at your university and discipline of choice, but also in any other path you may take. Good luck, and have fun writing!