

While we wait...

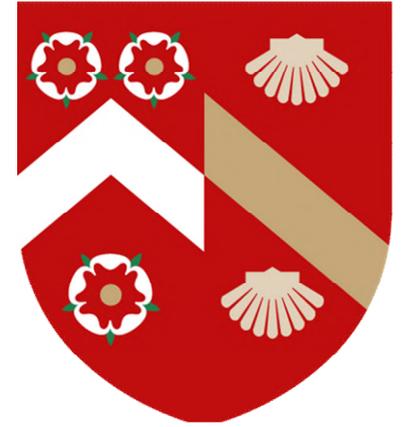
Head to [slido.com](https://www.slido.com) and enter the hashtag:

WadhamLive

Put an answer into the word-cloud:

One word about how you feel about your personal statement.





Preparing Personal Statements

Wadham College, University of Oxford

STRUCTURE

- **What** universities want
- **How** to structure a statement
- **Being** super-curricular
- **Plan** your next steps

What are universities looking for?

Some do's:

Some don'ts:

What are universities looking for?

Some do's:

- Communicate clearly
- Use evidence
- Use detail
- Be positive
- Be truthful
- Specific to the course

Some don'ts:

- Cliché (from a young age...)
- Cliché ('passion')
- Negativity
- Too abstract
- Bad grammar

What are the outcomes of going to university?

1. Critical thinking
2. Discipline
knowledge
3. Problem solving
4. Teamwork
5. Communication
6. Professional skills
7. Ethics and values
8. Creativity
9. Learning to learn

Source: OECD 2013

GET A PEN AND PAPER

Draw the image
I describe

Then place the 3
sections:

1. Extra-curricular
2. Super-curricular
3. Why this course?

Why do you want to study this course?

- Current studies
- Outside reading
- What has inspired you?

Super-curricular

- What have you read, watched, visited or listened to?
- Why was it interesting?
- How do these support and compliment the course you are applying for?

Extra curricular

- Try and focus on transferrable skills
- Selection criteria for other four universities

80% Academic
including
super -curricular

**20% Extra-
Curricular**

Being Super-Curricular

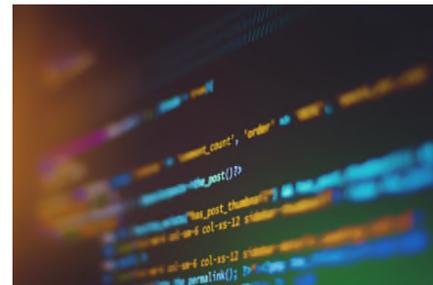
How have you developed your knowledge outside the classroom?

What have you done, read, visited, listened to that has inspired you?

summer school / EPQ



practical experience / work experience



reading



podcasts / lectures



- What are your super-curriculars?
- Have you got any lined up?
- Need some ideas? Look here!

WHERE ARE
YOU

Which student do you think a university would prefer for English?

STUDENT A

- School Prefect
- Volunteers
- Enjoys reading
- Plays flute
- Enjoys going to the theatre

slido.com

STUDENT B

- Enjoys reading sport biographies
- Enjoys reading dystopian fiction
- Writes for the school newspaper

#Wadham

“To find out more about the complexity of the brain, I read “So you want to be a brain surgeon” by Stephan Sanders.

This has given me a great deal of insight into neurosurgery.”

*Admissions Tutor Comment:
“While this illustrates that the candidate is reading around the subject, some further significance [should] be given.”*

What looks really impressive is if you can...

...take your super-curricular activity and say what it made you think or link it to things you are have done or are learning about.
(linking knowledge)

Or...say what it made you think, and use it as a link to other activities

(Using it as a stepping stone)

What examples do you have?

While reading *A Very Short Introduction to Molecular Biology*, I was struck by a segment on regulatory RNA molecules. I was particularly fascinated by the concept of RNA used in the regulation of gene expression. This led me to a *Nature* article about Riboswitches: RNA molecules that can bind to a ligand and change their physical conformation. This happens in the expression region of the riboswitch, and determines whether the RNA is transcribed or not, i.e. by forming hairpin loops, or cleaving itself. In this way, RNA can control itself using a system that is both simple and immediate. Taking biochemistry at degree level would allow me to learn more about cell function and control, but would also let me explore the full breadth of the subject, by using chemistry to explain biological processes. (*Biochemistry*)

Critical
Thinking
&
Stepping
Stones

I am interested in the way gender is portrayed in classical literature - particularly Greek Tragedy's strong feminine element. Attending lectures delivered by Professor Edith Hall that focused on women in tragedy, as well as lectures by Dr Felix Budelmann at the Oxford Pathways Study Day, which compared the works of the female poet Sappho and the male poet Anacreon, stimulated my love for this area. Of particular interest was the enigmatic life that Sappho is said to have lived which the documentary "Sappho: Love & Life on Lesbos", heavily discusses, as well as differences between the ancient Greek concept of homosexuality and our own. (*Classics*)

Critical
Thinking
&
Stepping
Stones

Some Wadham ideas...

- 1. Reading/ Attending/ Listening/ Work Experience
in/ Participating in*
- 2. I was struck by/ I was particularly interested in/*
- 3. This led me to/ To further my understanding/ In
response, I/ Fascinated, I/ Extending my
knowledge, I*

Personal statement openings tend to follow a similar format:

- Why you are excited about your subject?
- What you have done academically to show this?
- Keep it simple. Keep it short.

(Tip 1: Leave it until last)

(Tip 2: Draft 5 first sentences)

“Classical literature has preserved the history and society of the world that they have come from. Most notably, the connection between drama and society is what I find most intriguing. From Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* which seems to serve as a criticism of the ongoing Peloponnesian War, to Homer's *Iliad*, which portrays conventional ideas of masculinity and heroism.” *Classics*

Opening Paragraph Examples

“While visiting the Joint European Torus at the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy, I discovered how strong magnetic fields, radio waves and the injection of high speed neutral atoms can heat plasma to over 300 million degrees to achieve fusion, potentially providing a long term solution for the world's energy crisis. I learnt how mechanical engineering is central to managing the heat transfer; this was a key experience in my choice of course.” *Engineering*

“My first exposure to the concept of genetic disease was whilst doing work experience at a deaf school. I found it incredible that the assortment of four bases could have such a tangible effect on health and development. This sparked my curiosity in the theory of genetic mutation, and was my first introduction to Biochemistry.”

Biochemistry

Opening Paragraph Examples

“My admiration for French extends beyond its beautiful sounds to the richness of its history and culture. For my EPQ, I studied the Charter of Laïcité in French Schools and the history of secularism in France. In order to determine whether I believed it was coherent policy to ban religious symbols in schools, while subscribing to a motto of Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.”

French (and Arabic)

Extra-curriculars

Link them to skills useful for university:

“Balancing my work in school as a language and student council prefect, as well as working part-time, has greatly improved my organisational skills, as well as teaching me how to properly arrange my time.”

Classics

“...represent my school in hockey and netball, for which teamwork and commitment are crucial.”

Human Sciences

Extra-curriculars

Or keep it short and simple:

“To relax I play hockey and was captain of the team at school. I enjoy Music and Dance; achieving Grade 8 in Dance, Grade 7 in Piano and Singing, and competing at a national level in Dance.”

Medicine

“Outside academia, I enjoy reading, playing hockey, and taking part in drama productions, both on and off stage.”

Biochemistry

Why do you want to study this course?

- Current studies
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Super-curricular

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- Proofread. Aim for precision and economy in language.
- Make your language active

In the summer I was delighted to take the opportunity of attending a summer school at the University of Oxford...



Attending UNIQ, I learnt...

- Avoid generalisations

I like law because I like right and wrong → *Fascinated by property law, I...*

- Read aloud. Your ear will pick up what your eye has missed.

Editing tips

Next Steps

01

Reflect on one thing you've done you could write about

02

Identify one thing you'll do as a super-curricular activity

03

Start a document to keep a record of your work.

Application Support

Webinar Series

Live webinars for Year 12 students interested in applying to Oxford or Cambridge, hosted by the Wadham College Access Team.

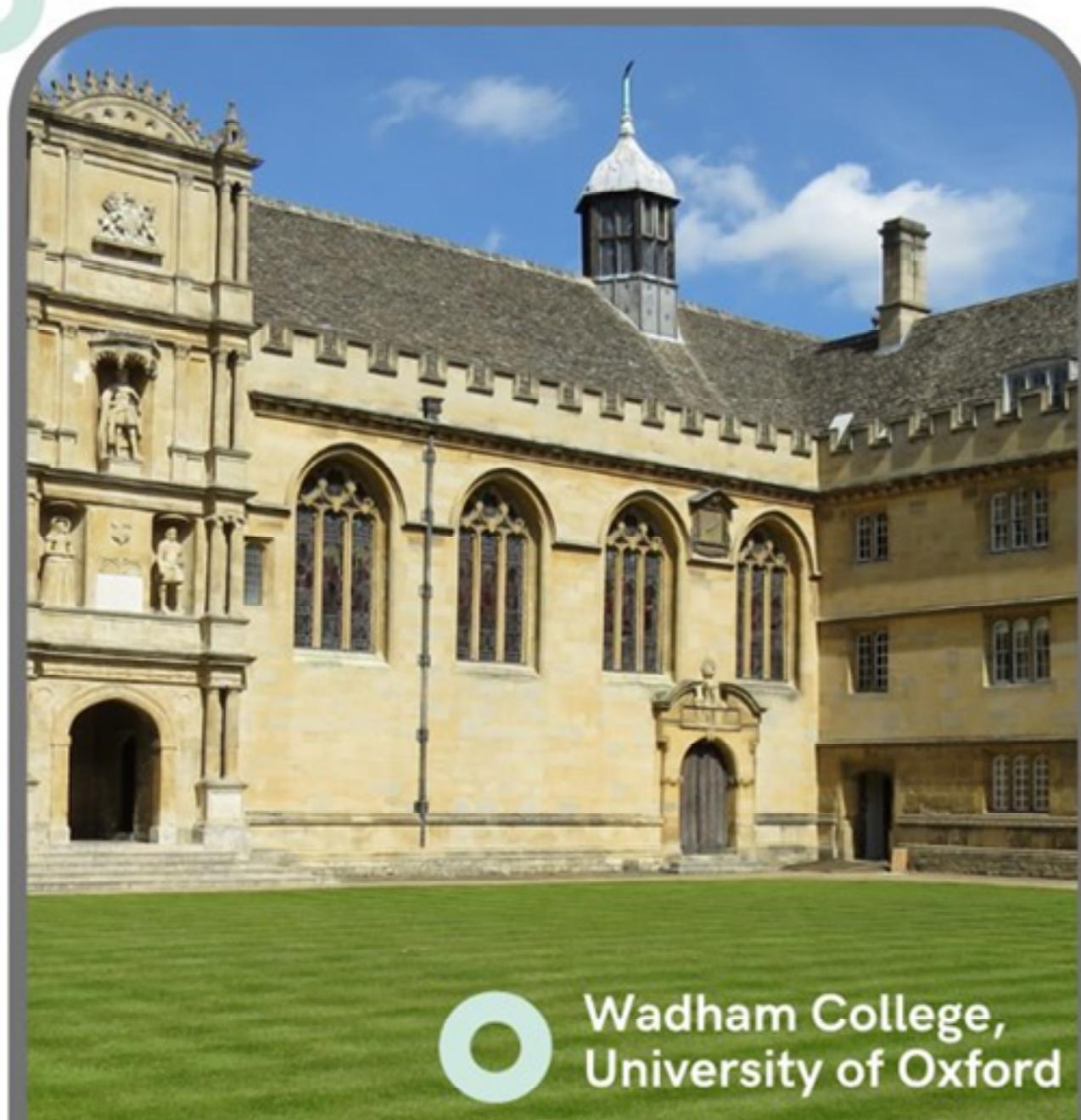
4th May - Oxford and Cambridge Explained

10th May - Personal Statements for Oxford and Cambridge

17th May - Super Super Curriculars (developing your knowledge outside the classroom)

24th May - Preparing Personal Statements

7th June - Approaching Admissions Tests



Wadham College,
University of Oxford

How can
we help?

QUESTION
& ANSWER