

Example 25: UCAS Personal Statement – Law

My interest in international law began with a question I could not answer: why did the International Criminal Court have jurisdiction over some atrocities but not others? The question arose during a history unit on the Nuremberg Trials when my teacher concluded the course by asking whether the international community had successfully created institutions capable of preventing similar crimes in the future. I initially assumed the answer would be straightforward. Instead, I discovered that international criminal justice is shaped by questions of state consent, jurisdiction, sovereignty, political negotiation, and institutional design. The more I read, the more I realised that understanding these issues required careful legal analysis rather than intuitive moral judgement. It is this analytical approach that has drawn me towards studying Law.

To explore these questions further, I began reading beyond my school curriculum. Studying introductory texts on public international law introduced me to the relationship between treaty obligations, customary international law, and the jurisdiction of international courts. What interested me most was not simply the substance of particular legal rules but the reasoning used to justify them. I found myself comparing judicial decisions, examining dissenting opinions, and considering how different interpretations of the same legal principles could produce significantly different outcomes. This process taught me that legal study requires precision, logical argument, and an appreciation for competing interpretations rather than a search for simple answers.

My academic interests extend beyond international law into constitutional and public law because they raise similar questions about the relationship between legal authority and political power. Studying government and politics introduced me to parliamentary sovereignty, judicial review, and the constitutional principles that shape public decision-making. I became particularly interested in how courts balance individual rights against broader public interests and how legal reasoning differs from political debate. Analysing cases and evaluating competing arguments strengthened my appreciation for evidence-based reasoning and reinforced my desire to study law at university.

English Literature has also contributed significantly to my preparation for legal study. Analysing complex texts has taught me to identify underlying assumptions, evaluate different interpretations, and construct arguments supported by textual evidence. I enjoy examining how language shapes meaning and how subtle differences in wording influence interpretation. These skills have helped me appreciate the importance of careful reading and persuasive writing, both of which I understand to be fundamental to legal analysis.

Beyond the classroom, I have actively sought opportunities to observe how legal principles operate in practice. Participating in a school debating society challenged me to defend positions with which I did not always personally agree, requiring me to

distinguish between personal opinion and reasoned argument. Preparing for debates encouraged me to research unfamiliar subjects thoroughly, anticipate counterarguments, and respond logically under pressure. I found that the most convincing arguments were not those expressed most confidently but those supported by clear reasoning and reliable evidence.

I also completed a short work-shadowing placement at a local law firm, where I observed client interviews, case preparation, and legal research. Although the placement involved routine administrative work as well as observation, I was struck by the level of preparation required before any legal advice could be offered. Solicitors rarely relied on instinct or assumption. Instead, every recommendation was grounded in legislation, precedent, and careful factual analysis. This experience reinforced my understanding that legal practice depends upon disciplined reasoning and meticulous attention to detail.

Alongside these experiences, I have participated in volunteering activities that involved supporting younger students with reading and academic mentoring. Explaining difficult concepts to others required patience and clear communication while reminding me that effective teaching depends upon understanding another person's perspective. These experiences strengthened my interpersonal skills and demonstrated the importance of listening carefully before attempting to provide guidance.

What continues to attract me to the study of law is its combination of intellectual rigour and practical significance. Legal questions rarely exist in isolation; they often involve competing principles, incomplete information, and legitimate disagreement. I enjoy analysing these complexities and developing structured arguments supported by evidence rather than relying on intuition alone. I am particularly interested in understanding how legal institutions adapt to emerging global challenges while maintaining the rule of law and procedural fairness.

I recognise that university study will challenge many of the assumptions I currently hold. That prospect is one of the aspects of legal education I find most appealing. I do not wish to study law because I believe I already understand the answers to difficult legal questions. I wish to study it because I want to develop the analytical skills necessary to examine those questions with greater depth, precision, and intellectual discipline.

A Law degree will provide the academic foundation needed to engage critically with complex legal issues while developing skills in research, analysis, advocacy, and written communication. I look forward to contributing actively to seminars, engaging with diverse perspectives, and learning from both academic study and practical opportunities offered by university life. Most importantly, I hope to become a student who approaches legal problems with curiosity, integrity, and a commitment to rigorous reasoning.

The question that first introduced me to international law remains unanswered in any absolute sense, and I no longer expect it to be. Instead, it has become the reason I wish to study law. I want to understand how legal systems attempt to resolve difficult questions where principles, politics, and practical realities intersect, and I am eager to begin developing the knowledge and analytical skills that such work requires.

