



Writing the Personal Statement for Health Professional Schools

The personal statement ...

...is a "revelation of your personality"

...includes your strengths, beliefs, and values.

...uses concrete, vivid details to demonstrate the qualities and characteristics you possess and will also aid you as a health care provider.

...is your first (and perhaps only) opportunity to sell yourself.

All health professional schools require applicants to submit a "Personal Statement" during the initial application phase. This statement is a critical element in the application process and can significantly help or harm a student's chance for success. This form is a tool to help you begin your personal statement. In addition to using this form, it is imperative that you consult with your Preprofessional advisor for further assistance. Following is a checklist of things to consider when writing this statement:

1. This statement must be personal. It is your initial opportunity to address the admissions committee. This statement can lead to an interview IF you express your commitments, motivations, and values. The personal statement should be a reflection of the unique individual that you are.
2. Be sure to discuss WHY you are interested in the chosen profession. Schools want to assess your motivation for this career before they ask for an interview. Are there events, people and /or experiences that reinforced your interest? Share personal vignettes that support your stated interest and motivation. Avoid clichés and undocumented generalizations about wanting to help people. Remember that numerous other professions cite "helping people" in their mission statement.

Before starting this statement, ask yourself "...what have I done to personally convince myself that I want to be a...?" Being a health care provider often means a lifetime of giving back to society--what sustained commitment have you made to humanitarian activities?

3. You may wish to discuss individuals or incidents that have shaped your life. However, avoid extensive references to childhood or high school experiences. Granted early exposure to medicine may have sparked an interest, but should not be the reason behind your pursuit of this goal. You must convey that you've made an adult decision to pursue this career.
4. ELABORATE upon extracurricular activities and/or volunteer/work experiences that you have listed elsewhere in the application. Do not make the mistake of merely re-listing these activities. Use this opportunity to give new information about your involvement which is not listed elsewhere. Since many students are involved in a number of activities, focus on noteworthy ones. Describe the depth of your involvement in a fashion that *implies* you have certain characteristics necessary to be a good health care provider. Discuss your contribution, what you have learned from the experience, and the personal satisfaction you have gained. Discuss the personal impact of these activities.

Consider personal qualities that have been developed and/or enhanced through such involvement. Do not write "I am a warm, compassionate person"-let the reader draw his/her own conclusions after reading your statement. Describe your experiences so that the reader concludes you are mature, independent, etc.--refrain from directly telling them so. Consider responses to the following questions: What did you learn? How has this reinforced your interest in the chosen profession?

5. The personal statement provides the opportunity to answer any perceived questions. Most applicants will *not* need to use this space to explain academic irregularities. However, if you have a significant number of "W's" or "I's" on your transcript, you may wish to consider addressing the reasons in the statement. Do not use the entire space to discuss your transcript and leave other questions about motivation and activities unanswered. If necessary *briefly* explain the nature of the situation and accept responsibility for your academic record. Consult with your pre-professional advisor if you need further guidance.
6. Many students wish to write about their personal philosophy--caution, this is a tricky thing to discuss in the statement because you may come across as being narrow-minded or intolerant to different opinions. While your personal philosophy is important, it is a difficult task to produce a relevant and sincere statement while discussing these items. Weigh the pros and cons before deciding to include this item. Perhaps your philosophy is better discussed at the interview.
7. Non-traditional background? If yes, use it to your advantage. If returning to school after a significant gap in time, describe why your career change is a well thought out decision. Focus on the positives of your current career while describing how medicine will fill the gaps of what is missing.
8. This statement must be well written with an introduction, body and conclusion. Do not expect your first draft to be the final product. Once the statement is complete, it is beneficial to have it reviewed by several individuals with different perspectives. An individual who has good editing skills for both spelling and grammar usage is of particular importance.

Take advantage of the consultants in the "Writing Center" in 300 Bessey Hall who are available to work with writers at all levels of proficiency and at various stages of the composing process. Call 432-3610 to schedule an appointment. The campus grammar hotline (432-1370) can also be consulted for current information of proper grammar usage.

9. When writing the statement take advantage of the maximum number of characters allowed. You are given a certain amount of space for a reason, and using one-half page does not convey a strong interest in the application. If you are submitting an application through a service (i.e. AMCAS), do not express an interest in a specific health professional school. Your application may not be very successful if MSU-CHM reads about your strong interest in U of M.

Personal statements sent directly to schools not participating with an application service should include a brief discussion of your interest in the school and its program.

Students planning to utilize centralized application services, please note the following maximum characters for the various services:

Osteopathic DO	Dental DDS &DMD	Podiatry DPM	Allopathic MD	Physician Assistant	Pharmacy	Physical Therapy
AACOMAS	AADSAS	AACPMAS	AMCAS	CASPA	PharmCAS	PTCAS
4,500 Characters Max	4,500 Characters Max	4,500 Characters Max	5,300 Characters Max	2,970 Characters Max	4,500 Characters Max	4,500 Characters Max

For sample Personal Statements refer to:

<http://www.examcrackers.com/mcat-essay-samples.php>