Personal Statements

It is common for postgraduate applications to include a personal statement; this is also known as the additional information section or more simply ‘supporting statement’. The personal statement sometimes incorporated within the main body of the application, in which case there may be guidelines governing what – and how much – you can write. Where no guidance is given, you should try to cover the following:

**Why you want to do the course or research**

- Try to make your answer sound convincing and authentic. A personal statement is meant be ‘individual’ so you need to articulate your motivations and interests
- In the case of vocational courses, mention any relevant work or project experience
- If you are applying for a PhD, be sure to highlight the research component of your undergraduate and/or postgraduate degrees.

**Why this field or subject**

- If you are ‘converting’ from one discipline to another you will need to convince an admission tutor that you have the commitment and capability to see the course through. Mention any units or modules that have sparked your interest in a new area
- You may be continuing with the same subject. In which case consider what insights you may have gained from your undergraduate study. Is there a particular focus or dimension that you would like to explore?

**Why you have chosen this university**

- Be prepared to explain your reasons why. Admissions tutors want to see evidence of real interest and commitment. Is the course noted for its innovative approach; does it have a particular focus that appeals to you?

**Academic ability**

- If the course has a research component then draw attention to any projects or work that shows your aptitude for research
- Draw attention to relevant skills e.g. technical, IT, research methodology
- If you are pursuing further study to compensate for a poor academic record, or degree, then you need to show an upward trend of improvement

**Additional skills**

- Think of the skills you will need to apply to successfully complete your course: communication, working to strict deadlines, possibly team work. Draw on your academic, social and other activities to show strength in these areas
How this course fits with your career plans

- You will not be expected to provide a detailed account of your career plans but you should highlight where it fits with your current trajectory
- If you are applying for a vocational or professional course, you will need to convince an admissions tutor of the motivation and rationale behind your application. Include details of relevant work experience/shadowing. You will need to convey a realistic understanding of the demands of the course, and your chosen career.

Structure

- Make sure your statement has clear and logical structure, with an introduction, main body and conclusion
- The information needs to be relevant to the course and university; avoid generic and bland commentary
- Make an impact with a strong introduction and conclusion; ‘tailing off’ at the end will weaken your statement

Language and grammar

- Use good English and pay attention to spelling and grammar. Poor written English is one of the most common reasons for rejection. You need to convince an admissions tutor that you are well equipped to meet the intellectual demands of postgraduate study, so it is very important to affirm this impression through your application. If in doubt, ask a friend to read it through and highlight the problem areas.

Further information

- [http://www.bath.ac.uk/careers/postgradstudy/statements.html](http://www.bath.ac.uk/careers/postgradstudy/statements.html) - detailed information on personal statements, including links to other sites
- [http://www.studentnet.manchester.ac.uk/careers/applicationsandinterviews/applicationforms/applicationsforfurtherstudy/](http://www.studentnet.manchester.ac.uk/careers/applicationsandinterviews/applicationforms/applicationsforfurtherstudy/) - summarises the key points on making applications for further study.
- [www.dundee.ac.uk/careers/resources/advice_tips/personal_statements.htm](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/careers/resources/advice_tips/personal_statements.htm) - useful top tips for writing personal statements
- [www.careers.lon.ac.uk/files/pdf/CEP_PersonalStatements.pdf](http://www.careers.lon.ac.uk/files/pdf/CEP_PersonalStatements.pdf) - comprehensive guide to personal statements
- [http://www.fulbright.co.uk/eas/studyus/postgraduate/essays.html](http://www.fulbright.co.uk/eas/studyus/postgraduate/essays.html) - Educational Advisory Service guide to personal statements – ‘statement of purpose’ – for US Graduate School applications
- [http://www.tda.gov.uk/Recruit/thetrainingprocess/makingyourapplication/applicationsassistant.aspx](http://www.tda.gov.uk/Recruit/thetrainingprocess/makingyourapplication/applicationsassistant.aspx) - the TDA has an applications assistant facility to help with PGCE personal statements