



Careers Service

Postgraduate Personal Statements

Use the examples to help write your own statement and take note of the comments at the end of each statement.

For personal statements on PGCE application forms, admissions tutors are looking for your motivation to teach and evidence that you have gained experience in working with young people and what you have observed from this. You need to demonstrate a knowledge of current educational and classroom issues as well as relevant subject knowledge and be able to comment on the challenges of teaching, as well as the rewards.

For PhD applications, you should demonstrate a keen interest in your intended research area and provide evidence of why your subject background and experience are relevant. PhD students need to be motivated, good at problem-solving and should be organised and able to manage their time effectively so provide evidence of how you have these skills. Strong academic references are important, so think about these carefully before you submit your application

Sample Statement 1

I decided to apply for a postgraduate course in management because I have an aptitude and a great interest in this area. I believe that the management function of business is the heart of operating a business and without good management most businesses will suffer. A company that ignores the management function is similar to a computer without an operating system. At present the business environment is extremely competitive and so companies need to use the potential of management to gain competitive advantage. The management function is no longer seen as 'basic' or a 'service' function but as an active and productive part of the company.

My interest in management arose while I was in the third year at university. I found that marketing is a requisite for my cultivation and I would like to expand my knowledge. As a graduate in marketing/advertising I believe I can bring a unique perspective to my studies and contribute usefully.

(comment - this statement is too short. More detail is needed on past study, reason for taking this course and future career plans and detail on what the student is doing NOW).

Sample Statement 2

I am applying for your course in the study of human resources management because it is a subject that interests me greatly. The globalization issue of today has provoked a serious crisis in the actual world economy giving human resources management an important role in finding a solution to this crisis. I believe that people are the principal players in any organization. People provide flexibility and are the only ones who can manage the process of change that enterprises need to respond to these difficult times.

As a psychologist I believe I have much to offer in this area as a catalyst and a consultant for organizational change as it affects the members of the organization. For successful change the employees need to be motivated, integrated and identified with the organization. Companies that are able to achieve this will have a competitive advantage.

After my graduation I came to England to study English and I realised that this was a highly developed country in terms of business, economics and human resources management. Developing countries like Colombia can learn a great many things from the UK and for this reason I think it will be a very good experience if I can study in your university. As my references testify, I am a conscientious and serious student who would be of great benefit to your institution.

I hope one day that I will be able to join a large and dynamic company and follow a career in human resources management. I am sure that the successful future of any ambitious company lies here. I also hope to acquire a lot of experience in order to be able to manage my own business. I hope that one day I will be ready to begin my own enterprise.

The successful completion of a masters course in a UK university will not only provide me with the necessary skills and the appropriate approach to human resources management problems – but will also greatly enhance my career prospects in Columbia.

My sports interests include volley ball, fitness training and skating. I am also interested in literature and languages.

(comment - a fair statement but not enough detail about HR Management issues. Too much waffle)

Sample Statement 3

At the present time I am studying at the Roberts School of English in Oxford. My course began in November and will end next June. I have enjoyed my time here very much and have made great improvements in my English skills as well as meeting new friends from around the world. I am now preparing to take an IELTS test in February and I am hopeful of achieving a high score.

I am a graduate of Shenzhen University in China. As you will see from my course transcript during my two and a half years at Shenzhen I studied a wide range of subjects in the field of international finance together with a number of other disciplines including computer applications, philosophy and English language/literature. Since my studies I have decided that I would like to pursue a career in management and administration – it is for this reason that I am applying to your institution.

I understand that the qualification I hold is not sufficient to enter a Masters programme. Therefore I am applying for entry to your diploma course in order to prepare myself for Masters study. After completing this preparation I would like to remain and complete a Masters programme in International Management or Business Administration.

After completing my studies in the UK I hope to join an international company in China in a management position. I would be able to offer any future employee my knowledge and training experience in the UK. It is necessary that I should obtain a formal qualification in management.

It is for the reasons here that I feel sure that the course you offer will lead me to achieve my ambition. If I am successful in my application I can assure that I have the necessary ambition and determination to succeed on the course.

I hope my application will be considered favourably.

(comment - this statement is acceptable but it would be better with more detail on future plans and hopes and detail about what the student is doing NOW)

Sample Statement 4

I studied my first degree at Keio University in Tokyo. I enjoyed very much my subject at university and in particular I enjoyed:

International Economics, Theory of World Economy, European Economy, Asia Economy

I found that these studies gave me a greater understanding of how business and the economy affect people and culture across the world. I also began to understand that because of the effects of global business culture and national diversity were reducing.

Not many years ago the Japanese way of business and manufacturing and trade were unique in the world and the economic success of Japan was tried to be copied. But now methods of business have become global and now Japan looks at other parts of the world for inspiration and new ideas. In a very short time new business ideas transmit around the business community and not any more the possessions of countries.

My intention to study in the UK for a postgraduate qualification in business or management is to deepen my understanding of the UK economy and business culture and to understand how the UK is part of the European Union. It seems to me that the EU and Japan and the USA are the major trading forces in the world and that changes by any one of them will have an impact on the others.

I wish to study for my postgraduate degree at one of the best business/management schools in the UK and I know that your course can help me to prepare to do this.

I hope I will be accepted.

(comment - this statement has plenty of detail on past studies but could do with more detail on practical/work experience and details on what the student is doing NOW).

Sample Statement 4

At school I became interested in current affairs and global issues through studying geography and economics at Leaving Certificate. At university, I chose to study politics to develop this interest. My degree has covered the study of domestic and world politics, development studies and foreign policy.

For the past two summers, I have worked as a volunteer on international development projects with 'XXX Trust', which have given me a valuable insight into the application of aid and the mechanics of infrastructure projects and development work overseas. I have also worked as a volunteer for Oxfam during the course of my studies, which has raised my awareness of the campaigns and fundraising activities with which they are involved.

I am an active member of the Irish Volunteer for Development Abroad (IVDA) Society and the UCC International Affairs Society, which has allowed me to meet and listen to a number of high profile speakers explaining the nature of their work and has further stimulated my interest in international affairs. I would now like to build upon this experience and study for the MSc in International Relations to further develop my knowledge of the relationships between trade, finance, environment, foreign policy and cultural and ethical issues that operate at a global level.

In particular, I like the course offered at X University as it offers a good mixture of core subjects alongside an interesting range of optional units. The course will develop my understanding of the theory and strategies used to address global issues and to learn how these have been applied in real-life case studies. I am a motivated and enthusiastic student, as demonstrated by my role as Course Representative on my Politics degree course and my involvement with the IVDA and International Affairs Societies. In summary, the MSc at X will provide me with a broad background of knowledge that will help me to pursue my aim of entering a career in this field.

Additional Information and Resources

<http://www.personalstatement.info/> (UCAS Personal Statements and College Admissions Essays)

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/cv/PersonalStatement.htm> (lots of information with additional external links to personal statement examples)

<http://www.northern.ac.uk/support/perosonalstate.asp?link=support> (3 examples to view online)

<http://www.britishuni.co.uk/pstates/pgstates.htm> (4 examples to view online)

<http://www.careers.rdg.ac.uk/postgrad/resources.asp>

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_perstate.html

The Guidelines for completion of a masters app form for the US is generally very helpful
e.g. http://www.fulbright.co.uk/eas/studyus/resources/pg_info.html

http://www2.essex.ac.uk/careers/pg_study/personal_statements_explained.shtm

<http://www.shf.ac.uk/careers/pdf/statement2.pdf> (specifically a Nursing/Healthcare studies statement)

PERSONAL STATEMENTS FOR TEACHER TRAINING APPLICATIONS

There follow four real personal statements from PGCE (teacher training applications). These are real examples, but of course personal details have been altered. They will give you ideas of how to write your own, and might be useful examples for any job or postgraduate study application where a personal statement is required. You will also find **interview reports** for teacher training interviews at www.kent.ac.uk/careers/ivreps/ivrepsmenu.htm

APPLICATION BY PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT FOR PRIMARY PGCE

"Describe briefly your reasons for wanting to teach giving the relevance of your previous education and experience, including teaching, visits to schools and work with other young people"

Studying Psychology has given me a broad knowledge about child development, the development of language and mental processes and the emotional development of a child. This general understanding is important for teaching.

Studying biology, statistics and computer, writing many essays in English at university in addition to my A-levels made me acquire skills and knowledge which are important for teaching the national curriculum.

In the psychology courses I have followed I have always had a particular interest when it was of relevance to children. This drew me into considering teaching. But my interest started much earlier and was increased by experience.

After my A-levels, I really enjoyed working as an English assistant at an international summer school. Although it was tiring at times, being with the children from breakfast to bed time showed me other aspects of their lives. I found it also very rewarding seeing the progress the children had made in English, and the openness they had acquired to other cultures.

Working as a special needs assistant in an ordinary primary international school was equally rewarding. It was quite demanding as I gradually acquired the responsibility of a group of children, but I also discovered that motivation was an important factor. I used a lot of imagination to maximise motivation, using original games, so that although we were working it would appear more like fun. My various experiences have made me positive about teaching, together with my education they are adequate support for a PGCE in primary teaching.

SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION BY MATURE PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT FOR PRIMARY PGCE

"Describe briefly your reasons for wanting to teach giving the relevance of your previous education and experience, including teaching, visits to schools and work with other young people"

Over a 3-4 year period I have worked as a parent-helper in two local primary schools. I have taken part in teaching within areas of the National Curriculum e.g. reading and group maths work, but I have also helped out on sports days, harvest festivals, school outings and during swimming lessons. Despite finding some of these experiences challenging, I have also found them extremely rewarding – particularly when I have been able to help a child overcome a learning barrier. I would also like to teach because doing so would give me the flexibility of being able to spend time during the school holidays with my own children while they are still young.

I believe that I would be able to make a valuable contribution to school life as a teacher. If I were given the opportunity I would be keen to participate in ways that would allow me to utilise some of my abilities e.g. piano playing. I would like to have the opportunity to apply my creative skills towards thinking up innovative ways of combining different areas of the National Curriculum within a project. Although the degree that I am taking, Psychology, is not a National Curriculum subject it is heavily based upon scientific analysis. Statistics/maths, information technology and child development are also core components of this degree. I also elected to take a non-compulsory module in human biology in the foundation year of my course because I wanted to have a good grounding in this before confronting it in core modules.

I feel that the study of psychology is very relevant to teaching, for example, I have learnt that information is better committed to memory (particularly in young children) when visual and tactile aides are used, particularly if used in novel ways. During my course I have learnt that information is grasped best when it is presented in a supportive and encouraging environment and introduced in manageable stages. I also recognise that it is not only the academic development of children that is important within the school system, but also their interpersonal relations.

Since returning to full-time education I have had to develop organisational skills in order to juggle studying with the responsibilities of having a family and home. I also travel a fair distance to University so I have had to be determined and hard working. I am sure that the experiences that I have gained with children and during my degree would make me a good teacher and justify my gaining a place on a PGCE course.

APPLICATION FOR SECONDARY ENGLISH

"Describe briefly your reasons for wanting to teach giving the relevance of your previous education and experience, including teaching, visits to schools and work with other young people"

I am applying to do teacher training as I feel that my experiences of assistant teaching have been both personally satisfying and beneficial to the children I worked with. I have enjoyed three periods of teaching. My first opportunity to teach was provided by the Community Service Scheme at Southwark School, which was one of the necessary requirements for the Gold Certificate I was awarded. The first position I was given as an assistant was at Hendon Junior School. I enjoyed my weekly sessions there and was interested in the teacher's technique of teaching young children, however I felt I would have preferred to have taught the subjects in more depth.

I had the opportunity at my second position at Fairgrove Junior School, to instruct my own group of pupils when I taught recorder lessons in the afternoon breaks. I was allowed to devise my own teaching methods and I received great satisfaction when the children showed understanding and progress.

My third experience was provided by Barnstaple College when I worked as an assistant teacher in music lessons at Key Lane Secondary School. Although I applied to teach English I enjoyed the opportunity to teach older children as the lessons were more tightly structured so that a better understanding could be attained.

I am now certain that it is the education of the eleven plus age group that I would like to specialise in as at this level I would be able to teach English or Literature to the depth at which it becomes the most interesting and enlightening. I would hope to give my students a sense of the background and history from which the literature was produced and lead them to an understanding and appreciation of the English language.

APPLICATION FOR SECONDARY ENGLISH AND DRAMA

"Describe briefly your reasons for wanting to teach giving the relevance of your previous education and experience, including teaching, visits to schools and work with other young people"

I was inspired to teach by my own experiences at school; in particular by my Maths and Drama teachers. Above all they treated me as an individual, encouraging me to achieve my personal best. In Drama our teacher's enthusiasm and commitment motivated us to produce A grade presentations. In Maths, a subject that I did not enjoy initially, my tutor used his sense of humour to teach us tricks and mnemonics to make learning interesting. Both were approachable and friendly and their honesty encouraged a sense of openness in the classroom.

I believe I would thrive as a teacher because of my own enthusiasm for and dedication to my subjects; coupled with my ability to relate to people in the 11-16 age group. I have tried to gain as much teaching experience as possible, beginning whilst in Y12 by attending Y9 and 10 English lessons as a classroom assistant. My positions as house and camp prefect enabled me to get to know the younger students outside the classroom. A trip to Kenya to assist in an orphanage and school allowed me to use these skills to encourage the Kenyan children to love communication and learning.

As teacher of English and Drama in the Edenfield Student Teaching Programme, I was able to teach children both practical and emotional expression. Edenfield is a summer programme consisting of classroom teaching and extra curricular activities, including sports and arts. It is aimed at non-English speaking students aged 11-14. The intensive nature of the course encourages meaningful relationships to develop and all the teachers were actively involved in personal and pastoral care. Conveying my own enthusiasm for my subjects helped the students develop more confidence and a better understanding of spoken and written English. I sought especially to find new ways of presenting familiar ideas, to ensure that my class gained as much as they could from the summer school. The positions of responsibility I held at Edenfield also included Head of the Drama faculty and radio media course and group leader. In these demanding roles I participated in planning the overall structure of the whole course, in addition to preparing lesson plans for my own classes. I have also worked with much younger children in summer courses at respected international pre-schools.

During my time at university, class discussion and open forum have proved useful when preparing my own written work and analysing that of others. I appreciated studying a wide range of texts, analysing period and context. I have also maintained a keen interest in extra curricular activities; including being an active member of the Children's Theatre Company and attending Archbishop's school weekly, for one term, to assist in their A-level drama classes. I learned a great deal from the classes and as a teacher I hope to continue discovering and learning along with my students.

Personal Statement General Information

- **Purpose of a personal statement**
- **Questions to ask yourself when writing a personal statement**
- **Writing out your personal statement**
- **Top tips on writing a personal statement**
- **Referees**
- **PGCE personal statement**
- **Further information and help**

Purpose of a personal statement

- The purpose of a personal statement is to help an organisation find out about you and your suitability for the job or course they have to offer.
- It is an opportunity for you to present your goals, experiences and qualifications in the best possible light as well as to demonstrate your writing ability.
- A personal statement provides scope for you to distinguish yourself from the other applicants.

Questions to ask yourself when writing a personal statement

Your answers to these questions may help you to decide what to include in your personal statement:

- What in your life story makes you special, unique or impressive?
- What interests you about the field of work/study for which you are applying and how did you learn about it?
- What are your relevant work experiences?
- What are your career goals?
- What skills do you have (e.g. problem solving, willingness to learn, leadership, communication skills) and can you provide evidence to back up your claims?
- What personal characteristics do you possess (e.g. integrity, compassion, persistence) and, again, can you provide evidence to back up your claims?
- What responsibilities have you undertaken?
- What difficulties have you overcome?
- Why should you be chosen above the other applicants?

When you have thought about enough examples and have the appropriate evidence to back them up you can then write your personal statement.

Writing out your personal statement

Opening section

Start with a strong opening paragraph that will grab the reader's attention.

Middle section

This should be used to provide details of your interests, knowledge and experience of your particular field. You may also include information about your qualifications and previous relevant work experiences. Give recent and relevant examples. What you select to include in your personal statement and the choices you make will help the reader form a judgement about you so it would be wise to give considerable thought to this.

End section

Finish by tying together the various issues you have already raised and reiterate your interest in the job or course.

Referees

You may be asked to supply the names of referees in support of your application:

- Your principal referee would normally be your **academic/personal tutor**.
- Make sure that you have your **referees' permission** prior to giving their names.
- Provide your referees with **information about yourself** and what you are applying for. You may wish them to mention, for example, your academic achievements, predicted grades if appropriate, jobs, travel experience, etc.
- Providing a **copy of your CV and/or your application form** to your referees may also be useful.

Remember: If your referees are well informed about your background and aspirations it will help them to write a more focused and personal reference.

PGCE Personal Statement

In your personal statement you will need to:

- discuss why you want to teach;
- outline your experience in State School(s);
- highlight any other relevant work;
- explain the relevance of your previous education and experience;
- give details of any work experience.

You might want to consider the following questions when thinking about what to write:

- What is your motivation for teaching and what has influenced your decision to teach? Draw on your experiences in the classroom and also any other work you have done with young people.
- What have you learnt from your experiences in the classroom? Reflect on the satisfaction you gained during this time.
- How does your previous education relate to the subject(s) you want to teach?
- Do you have any other skills that would be useful as a teacher for example, sport, music, drama or art?
- Do you have any skills or knowledge from other work experience/paid work that you feel are relevant to the role of a teacher?

Once you have drafted a copy of your personal statement you may wish to **get feedback from a careers adviser**.

The Careers Service has a reference copy of the AGCAS booklet entitled '**Applying for a PGCE**', which includes tips on the personal statement section of the PGCE application form.

Further information and help

General

- Read the **application forms** information on this website as much of this information is relevant.
- Bring your personal statement to get feedback from a **careers adviser**.

UCAS application

Look at section 10 on the UCAS website (guide on how to apply) for help on **writing a personal statement for a UCAS application** (either for a second undergraduate degree or a graduate medicine degree).