



## Personal Statements for Postgraduate Study

The purpose of the personal statement is to explain why you have chosen the specific course to which you are applying and to demonstrate what you have to offer.

Many universities specify what they want to see in the statement, so ensure you address the requirements they outline. If you are applying for a PhD, a research proposal is usually required.

### Tailor your statement

A good personal statement allows the admissions tutor to understand how you have come to your decision to apply for the course.

Ensure that your statement is specific to the course and not generic. Unless you are applying through a central application point, such as GTTR for teacher training, write a new statement for each course you apply to.

### Prepare

Note any special features of the course that particularly appeal to you by researching the course and alternative choices. What distinguishes the course from similar courses? What are its strengths? Are there experts teaching on the course that you would learn from? Talk to admissions contacts for the course to find out what they might be expecting to see in the personal statement. Admissions staff can also discuss the strengths of a course, specialisms, etc.

If you need to provide an academic reference, obtain your referee's agreement well in advance. Include their email address under their contact details. Update your referees about what you have been doing, successes, etc.

### Produce a draft

Outline how your previous educational background and work experience have informed your choice. Show how the course content relates to your current interests, professional experience, and career ambitions. Mention courses which might have provided you with a good foundation to what you want to study (possibly highlighting any particularly high grades) and highlight any modules of particular interest in the course you are applying for.

Cover topics specified in any guidance notes for completing the form. Common requirements include:

- Why you wish to continue studying
- What interests you about the subject
- Why this institution (research expertise)
- How the course fits into your career plans
- Relevant study (your degree, specific modules, etc)
- Research experience (dissertation)

- Any relevant working experience
- Extracurricular interests and achievements

Extracurricular interests and achievements help to differentiate you from the crowd. Membership of university societies linked to your area of application (especially if you helped to organise them), taking part in relevant competitions, attendance at conferences, external lectures, etc. Playing for a university sports team or being a Course Representative or Student Ambassador shows that you have contributed to the life of the university. Attendance at events organised by the Career and Skills Development Service, including employer-led events and the mentoring programme, show evidence of your commitment to career planning.

### Review your draft

Use enthusiastic, positive language. Keep your statement concise. Unless instructed otherwise, aim to write about 500 words, no more than one side of A4. If in doubt, ask admissions contacts how much information they expect. Your statement should have:

- A clear introduction and conclusion
- Clear and concise language
- No spelling or grammatical errors
- A logical flow

### Check before sending

You can bring your draft statement to us at the Career and Skills Development Service for review. [Book an appointment online](#). You might also want to ask an academic from your department for their opinion, particularly if they are involved in selecting for courses.

If you do ask anyone to check your statement, ensure that they also see a description of the course, the application form itself and any guidelines provided for completion.

### Useful websites:

- You can find useful resources on CareersHub. Look under **Personal Statements** or **Postgraduate Studies** in the Research section.
- Find A PhD has a section on writing research proposals: [www.findaphd.com/student/study/study-3.asp](http://www.findaphd.com/student/study/study-3.asp)
- The Careers Group Personal Statements information: [www.careers.lon.ac.uk/files/pdf/CEP\\_PersonalStatements.pdf](http://www.careers.lon.ac.uk/files/pdf/CEP_PersonalStatements.pdf)