PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Graduate schools and professional programs require personal statements from their applicants. Personal Statements may also be called a Statement of Purpose, Statement of Intent, Mission Statement, Admissions Essay, or Personal Essay. Typical instructions might be something like: *Write a one page statement about your history, interest in your intended field of study and your career plans. Describe your experiences and explain their significance relevant to this graduate program...*

**PURPOSE**

- To describe your academic and research background, related skills and experience.
- To show you are interested and demonstrate your ability to write clearly.
- To indicate that you are prepared and uniquely qualified for graduate studies.
- To show your understanding of how a particular program is right for you.
- To persuade admissions committee to select you for their program.

**BEGIN WITH AN OUTLINE**

- Motivations for the area of study: influences in your life and special events.
- Academic Experience: outline your educational background: degrees, majors, special knowledge that demonstrates your foundation in the academic field, research and academic experience, conference presentations, journal publications, etc.
- Experience: jobs, internships, activities, research, teaching, related projects...
- Skills and interests related to academic field of study and related career field.
- Specific skills related to academic area, such as quantitative, statistical, computer, language, scientific, laboratory, research, clinical, writing, teaching, analyzing, etc.
- Strengths, weaknesses, personal characteristics and accomplishments.
- Educational and career background and goals.

**TIPS FOR WRITING STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE**

- Review each school’s instructions carefully and make sure to include all information that is requested in your statement – instructions do vary by program across the country.
- Write clearly about the meaning and significance of your related experience.
- Tie your related experience to your educational and career goals.
- Describe your reasons for seeking admissions to a particular program.
- Describe your research interests and career intentions.
- While a statement of intent has an autobiographical focus, it is not a biography of your whole life, especially since most personal statements have a one or two page limit.
- Focus on what you have already achieved through your education and describe your educational foundation for graduate study.
• Describe what you want to achieve academically with additional education.
• Write about your future career plans after completing your graduate studies.
• One strategy is to start writing from the time when you decided to apply and lead up to more current information about your background preparation and qualifications.
• Edit until you have highlighted the most important points about your academic background, related experiences and your qualifications – then edit some more.
• Write an individually tailored essay for each graduate school application.
• Do not ramble, make the statement too long, bore the reader, dwell on bad luck stories, be too cute, appear to be pompous or arrogant, or write vaguely. Avoid clichés.
• Explain challenges and obstacles you have faced.
• Extenuating circumstances you need to explain (GPA, test scores, limited experience).
• Write in your own words, in first person, in a straightforward style, with details.
• Be personal, positive, persuasive, coherent and concise.
• Emphasize your strengths. Support your skills and qualifications with examples.
• Uniqueness - how are you special, distinct, different, impressive, unique?
• Compelling reasons for you to be admitted to a program.

WHY THIS GRADUATE PROGRAM?

• Why you are interested in attending a particular program of study – specific criteria need to be addressed in your statement to demonstrate you have researched their program and college.
• Criteria to consider include: faculty, reputation, rankings, size of program, costs, student/faculty ratio, diversity of faculty and students, location, residency, etc.
• Identify criteria that are important to you in evaluating programs.
• Explain what is most important to you in selecting a program...

CHECKLIST for Graduate School and Professional Programs Applications

✓ Solidify career interest area.
  • Thoroughly research specific programs.
  • Begin with a long list of possible schools.
  • Narrow your list to 20-25 to seriously consider.
  • Then select your final choices and complete your applications.

✓ Start early. Complete all required application forms long before the deadlines.

✓ Take appropriate admissions test
  • GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT, PCAT, DAT, MAT...
  • Consider taking a preparation course for the admissions test.
  • Get test scores forwarded to all of your schools of interest before deadlines.
✓ Get letters of recommendation from faculty and employers.
  • Give your references at least two months advance notice so they have plenty of time.
  • Check back with schools to be sure references letters are received by deadlines.

✓ Get official transcripts sent from all colleges and universities you have ever attended.

✓ Draft, rewrite and polish statement of purpose.
  • Brainstorm, outline, write, edit, rewrite, get other’s opinions, edit again and polish...
  • Proofread carefully for grammar, spelling, punctuation, content and flow.
  • Ask three people to proofread your writing and provide constructive comments.
  • Career Services counselors are available to review personal statements.
  • Type application forms, error free. Most all applications are submitted online.
  • Most applications are online, however, if you are asked to submit by mail, use registered mail.

✓ Keep a copy of everything you submit for each application for every school – this will be helpful to review when you prepare for your graduate school admissions interviews.

✓ Verify all of the above. Be sure application materials are received before the deadline. Late materials and incomplete applications are not considered.
  • For Rolling Admissions schools, it is advantageous to submit applications early (November-December) to be considered by the admissions committee early on.

✓ Prepare for an admissions interview – buy a suit and start practicing.
  • Career Services helps students with personal statement critiques, mock interviews, interview seminars, individual counseling, and the UA Interview Prep program.

GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
  • What areas of graduate study are you considering?
  • Describe how your education and experience has prepared you for graduate studies?
  • What are your career intentions?
  • What is your experience outside the classroom in this field?
  • What are your research interests?
  • Describe your research experience.
  • Describe your career related work experiences.
  • What skills have you developed relevant to this career field?
  • What challenges do you think you will face during graduate school?
  • What criteria are you considering in selecting a graduate program?
  • Tell me about your involvements on campus or in your community as an undergraduate student. What was your role and contribution?
  • What career goals do you have for after graduate school?
  • What do you hope to do after completing your graduate degree?
  • Why are you interested in this program? What would you bring to this program?
  • Why do you believe the admissions committee should select you?
ADMISSIONS INTERVIEWS

Review the handout for Graduate School Admission Interviews:
http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/applying-to-graduate-or-professional-school/applying-to-graduate-school#admission

Medical, Pharmacy, and Nursing Professional Program Admission Interview handouts are also available in print in the Career Services office and also online as printable PDF files:
http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/applying-to-graduate-or-professional-school/medical-school-interviews
http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/applying-to-graduate-or-professional-school/pharmacy-school-interviews
http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/applying-to-graduate-or-professional-school/nursing-school-interviews

CAREER SERVICES RESOURCES

➢ Career Services counselors are available to discuss graduate school plans, evaluate personal statements and to provide admissions interview preparation strategies.

➢ Mock Interviews are available all year – call 621-2546 to make an appointment.

➢ UA Interview Prep is an interactive program to help you polish your interviewing skills through practicing with hundreds of practice questions using a web cam:
http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/interviewing/ua-interview-prep

➢ Online information with program profiles, rankings and application information:
  • http://www.career.arizona.edu/Webresources/?apply_graduate
  • http://www.career.arizona.edu/students/?applygradschool
  • http://www.petersons.com/
  • http://www.gradschools.com/

➢ In print in the Career Services Career Information Center library in SUMC411:
  • “Graduate School Companion” by Peter Diffley
  • “Ms. Mentor’s New and Evermore Impeccable Advice for Women and Men in Academia” by Emily Toth
  • “Game Plan for Getting into Medical School” by Peterson’s
  • “So You Want To Be A Professor” by Aarne Vesilind
  • “The Ph.D. Process” by Bloom, Karp and Cohen
  • “Getting What You Came For” by Robert Peters
  • “The Academic Job Search Handbook” by Julia Vick and Jennifer Furlong
  • “Game Plan for Getting into Graduate School” by Peterson’s
  • “Game Plan for Getting into Business School” by Peterson’s
  • “Graduate Admissions Essays” by Donald Asher
  • “Great Personal Statements for Law School” by Paul Bodine
  • “Game Plan for Getting into Law School” by Peterson’s
  • “Professional Degree Programs in the Visual and Performing Arts” by Peterson’s
  • “The Chicago Guide to Your Academic Career” by Goldsmith, Komlos and Schine Gold
  • “Life on the Tenure Track” by James Lang
  • “The Compleat Academic” by Darley, Zanna and Roediger
  • “Graduate School Admissions Advisor” by Newsweek and Kaplan