

# Graduate School Personal Statements

---

## What is a Personal Statement?

The basic purpose of a personal statement is to write an “essay” that represents your goals, experiences, motivations and qualifications in a positive manner as well as to demonstrate your writing abilities. This is your first introduction to the program admissions committee, so it is important that you take the time to create a quality piece of work. Remember, this is your chance to show them that you are a good match for their program.

## GETTING STARTED

---

### Prepare Your Materials

#### ASK YOURSELF:

- a. What is the MOST compelling reason you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in YOU?
- b. What is something that you have experienced that is not common to the people that will be reading your essay?
- c. At what particular moment did you first think of pursuing this type of career path?
- d. Consider your immediate future – how have your classes influenced your direction, what research skills have you learned, internships or professional experience.
- e. What are your career goals? Make a list of your real reasons for pursuing this field.

**Now re-order your ideas in the order of interest to your targeted audience – THE ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE!!!**

### Write a Rough Draft

- a. Sometimes programs will specify a question for you to answer.
- b. READ THE QUESTION! Re-read it throughout your writing of the essay.
- c. 1<sup>st</sup> copy will be ROUGH – it’s ok! *Write when you write, edit when you edit.*
- d. Write like you talk – let it come from the heart. Don’t think too much.
- e. It’s like an interview –read it out loud to get the full effect.
- f. Grab their attention right off the bat.
- g. Don’t be afraid to use vivid detail to make a point.
- h. If you are having difficulties move on to another part of your essay – it’s not going to move! ☺

## PERSONAL STATEMENT OUTLINE

---

### Introduction

It is important to grab the reader’s attention early in your essay. Many personal statements begin with a catchy opening; something unique that makes you, the applicant, stand-out from other applicants. From there you can connect the examples or experiences you might have to the actual program that you are applying for within that institution.

### Detailed Supporting Paragraphs

Following paragraphs should address specific questions from the application including the strengths of the program/institution, your own qualifications, the factors that influenced your decision and any goals that you hope to accomplish as a result of your additional schooling. It is extremely important to give the reader concrete and relevant examples of your experiences that are able to support your argument about your qualifications.

### Conclusion

This final part of your essay is the “tie-in”- tying together all the issues that you have discussed in your essay and reiterating your interest in the particular program or institution. This is also your opportunity to share with the admissions committee how this program may help you in reaching your long-term goals.

## **EVALUATING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT**

---

Below are questions for you to consider after you have completed your rough draft of your statement.

1. Did the opening paragraph capture your attention?
2. Did the statement keep your interest throughout the whole essay?
3. Was it well written?
4. Did it seem positive and upbeat?
5. Did you answer the question(s)?
6. Did you forget to add anything important?
7. Any typos or other errors?
8. Does this statement make you look unique from the next candidate?

## **TIPS**

---

- #1 Complaint from Admissions Committees – ALL THE SAME
- Don't hide information that the committee will consider pertinent – you want to become a social worker and your mom is the Director of Social Services.
- If you have grades or test scores that do not represent your true potential, you can explain them in your essay. Don't make long involved excuses; keep it simple and absent of drama; no whining and no feeling sorry for yourself. Move on to the positive.
- Avoid excessive use of "I"
- Avoid using obvious clichés (ex. "I'm a people person."); be specific
- Keep it brief – some programs will limit you in words (ex. 500 word limit)
- PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD!!! And when you are done have a faculty, advisor, friend or family member proofread it too!
- Be genuine and good luck! ☺

## **CAREER SERVICES CONTACT**

---

Karolyn Bald – Liberal Studies Career Advisor  
Second Floor Wilder Hall • (608) 785-8514  
[www.uwlax.edu/careerservices/](http://www.uwlax.edu/careerservices/) • [bald.karo@uwlax.edu](mailto:bald.karo@uwlax.edu)

## **REFERENCE**

---

Asher, D. (2000). Graduate Admissions Essays (Rev. ed.). Toronto: Ten Speed Press.