



OVERVIEW

Personal Statements are an important part of a graduate and professional school application. A personal statement is your opportunity to bring your individual voice and personality to your application, and its purpose is to convince the reader that you are an ideal candidate to enter the program. You need to show evidence that you have the research skills, mindset, and scholarly interest to succeed.

GUSTAVUS RESOURCES

Career Development - gustavus.edu/career/PersonalStatements.php

Writing Center - gustavus.edu/writingcenter/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

www.e-education.psu.edu/writingpersonalstatementsonline/

www.healthcareers.umn.edu/online-workshops

owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/

www.petersons.com/graduate-schools/graduate-personal-statement.aspx



**CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

GET STARTED

- **Read the directions.** Follow any directions outlined by the graduate or professional school, including length and how to submit your statement, and answer any required questions. Schools and individual programs may have separate statements.
- **Understand your audience.** Your audience is typically an admissions committee that could contain faculty members, professionals, current graduate students, and community members. They are looking for original, reflective, and non-generic personal statements.
- **Develop your theme.** Spend time thinking about your theme - typically an abstract quality (e.g. the desire to help others, the importance of individual contribution). Think about experiences that have shaped your life or obstacles that you have overcome.
- **Write a draft.** To start, try creating an outline or brainstorming 8-10 reasons why you would like to pursue this degree. A well-written statement takes time to craft. Expect to write several drafts of your personal statement.

TIPS

Keep in mind the following options for your statement:

- Be sure to proofread. Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Use a formal writing style for your personal statement. Avoid informal language and punctuation such as dashes (-), contractions (aren't, didn't, couldn't), starting a sentence with a conjunction (And or But), and overuse of exclamation points (!). Use first person voice and use active not passive statements.
- Cliches and empty phrases should be avoided (e.g. "I've always wanted to...", "I want to help people", "Since I was a child...", "It has always come naturally to me", "I love...", etc.)
- Keep the statement focused on your theme in relation to the program. It is not possible to write about every experience from your entire life.
- Tailor your personal statement for each school or program; do not use a generic statement or the same statement for every school or program to which you apply. For Health Professions programs that use centralized application systems, you only need to write one personal statement.
- Connect your current research and areas of focus to your graduate school interests and goals. Include in your statement why you are interested in these ideas or research questions.
- For Ph.D. programs with a research focus, identify the professor within the program with whom you would want to study. You should understand their background, research and publications and how they connect with your research and career goals. Contact the professor before applying to be sure they are accepting students that year.
- When discussing your experiences, use concrete examples - be specific! Make sure that examples tie to your theme and demonstrate your qualifications for the program.
- If you do not know exactly what you want to do after you graduate, you should be able to show how the program will connect to your career goals.



GET FEEDBACK

SELF ASSESSMENT

Before you give your statement to someone else to review, it's good to take time to evaluate your writing. The **University of Minnesota** recommends taking time for reflection and evaluation. In your statement, have you demonstrated the following:

- Motivation - demonstrated through ongoing preparation for the profession and can include initial inspiration.
- Fit - determined through self-assessment of relevant values and personal qualities as to whether they align with the profession.
- Capacity - relates to the accurate self-assessment of strengths, weaknesses and challenges, and ability to frame them to be competitive.
- Vision - refers to the impact sought to make in the profession.
- Context - circumstance that form the setting for an event, statement or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.
- Distanced Traveled - where you've come from to get to where you are now.

*Taken from the **University of Minnesota** Online Short Courses for Health Professions. www.healthcareers.umn.edu/online-workshops*

OUTSIDE ASSESSMENT

- Have at least three different reviewers look at your draft, preferably faculty or professionals experienced with reviewing personal statements. It is recommended that one of the reviewers has strong editing/grammar skills.
- Provide
 - Your résumé or background information
 - The statement prompt that has been provided from the program/application
 - Directions on what you would like them to do
 - Your timeline - when you want comments back. Give the reviewer time to read (48 hours or more) and provide them with a deadline, "I hope to have your feedback by the end of the week."
- Each reviewer is going to provide different feedback. It is ultimately up to you to decide whether to incorporate or reject the feedback given.