

## The Personal Statement

One of the most time-consuming and important portions of your formal health professional school application is your personal statement. The best personal statement typically involves a lengthy editing process. This includes your own editing, as well as input from others. It is very important that you do the writing.

Your personal statement is your chance to inform admissions committees about your personality, individuality, passions, dedication and leadership abilities as well as what you bring to the mix of students and future professionals. It should not be a narrative rendition of your résumé—that information is provided elsewhere in your application. DEMONSTRATE to your readers your wonderful traits, accomplishments, and strong communication skills. Let your letter writers TELL admissions committees about you and your organizational, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving, and other characteristics.

Follow directions carefully! Use words sparingly and avoid cliché, formulaic motifs and quotations. Aim instead for substantive, informative, insightful prose that provides admissions committees with a relevant, convincing rationale for giving your application serious consideration. Remember, competition is fierce, so shun the cookie-cutter personal statement.

Typically, this personal statement should be no more than a page in length; and it should be derived from the longer statement you supplied as part of your HPAC application (as described above). Specific information is available from the AMCAS and other application services. In addition to the assistance provided by Career Services and your faculty adviser/s and mentors, members of the Health Professions Advisory Committee may be available to provide guidance and feedback on your personal statement. However, keep in mind that admissions committees want to know how *you* write and think, not how *we* write/think.

You may find that this is one of the most difficult essays you will ever write. Remember, this statement is your opportunity to describe the special strengths and qualities you feel you will bring to the profession. Moreover, it is your chance to discuss anything in your background that you feel should be mentioned or explained, including difficult semesters due to illness, family problems, etc. Make the explanation as positive as possible by stressing what you learned from the experience. Take responsibility for your actions and never make excuses or “sing the blues.”

Cover a few topics in some depth. Avoid generalizations and trite claims such as “I have always wanted to practice medicine” without backing them up. Decide what is really important to you and discuss it. These topics do not need to be directly related to your chosen profession, but should have some relevance to your professional potential. A well-written, meaningful anecdote or example may often be more effective than dry declarative prose. By selecting what you have to say carefully, you should be able to “show” rather than “tell” your reader about your beliefs, qualities, motivations, etc. The AMCAS, for example, provides some suggested topics to consider when drafting your essay, including, for example, why you have selected the field of medicine, your motivations for doing so, and factors that may have influenced this decision and/or played an influential role in your choice of undergraduate coursework.