



Personal Statements

Objectives



By the end of this workshop, students will be able to:

- Answer prompts correctly
- Organize the information required in a personal statement
- Write an adequate personal statement
- Proofread the content and structure of a personal statement

Purpose of a Personal Statement



Personal statements are used to:

- Attract the attention of a selection committee.
- Help a selection committee understand the reasons why the candidate wishes to be considered.
- Convince a selection committee that the candidate is suitable for admission to a program of study, internship or grant.
- Serve as letter of introduction to a selection committee.
- Underscore the candidate's aspirations, experiences, and academic qualifications.
- Allow potential employers to match their needs with the candidates' skills.

Structure of a Personal Statement

Personal Statement Outline

- Introduction
- Body Paragraph 1
- Body Paragraph 2
- Body Paragraph 3
- Conclusion

Throughout this module, you will find information highlighted in one of the colors found to the left. When a given topic is highlighted in a specific color, it means that this specific topic corresponds to the color-coded section of the statement only.

What is a Prompt?



A prompt is a question or series of questions that require a candidate to answer so that a selection committee is able to decide whether candidates will be suitable recipients of a grant, internship or program of study.

Frequently used prompts



- What motivates you to apply to the program?
- What prior education/instruction makes you an ideal candidate?
- What research/work have you conducted in your field of study?
- What is your current skillset?
- How will admission to this program help you achieve your long-term goals?

Personal Statement Introduction



A personal statement introduction must address the following elements:

- Who you are
- What you are applying for
- Why you are applying for it
- What makes you the ideal candidate

Please note that this paragraph should be clear and concise.

Example Introduction #1

Here is an example of what an introduction looks like. Pay close attention to the highlighted elements because they constitute the foundation of this section:

My name is José. Prior to coming to Mythic College, I had a very skewed view of what geography was. Luckily, during my freshman year, I enrolled in a geography course simply because it was the only honors class that fit in my schedule. To my surprise, I was stimulated to think of the world from a different perspective: to view people and places and examine how each one relates to the other. I kept on enrolling in additional geography courses and I always found myself interacting with the course material in a very natural manner. Because the discipline fascinated me and its theories felt easy for me to see in my surroundings, I decided to pursue doctoral studies in Urban Planning at Brown University.

Introduction Checklist



Make sure the introduction answers the following questions:

- Does his introduction say who he is?
 - Yes! He mentioned his name and he indirectly mentioned personal details that describe him and his background further.
- Does his introduction state what he is applying for?
 - Yes! He mentioned that he is pursuing doctoral studies in Urban Planning at Brown University.
- Does this introduction state why he is applying for the program?
 - Yes! In his introduction, he explained how he became interested in geography. It also serves as the reason why he is applying for the program.
- Does this introduction state that José is the ideal candidate?
 - Yes! It states that he already has done coursework in that field and is interested pursuing it further.

Example Introduction #2



Here is an example of what an introduction looks like. Pay close attention to the highlighted elements because they constitute the foundation of this section:

As a master's student, I am currently working in the Chemistry Research Laboratory and my research group studies the effects of Helium in the atmosphere directed by Dr. John Rodriguez. I am personally interested in what correlations arise when helium clouds are introduced in glacial ecosystems in order to revert the melting of ice caps. The addition of a helium compound mixed with other commonly found aerosolized molecules have shown to impede harmful solar radiation to enter the Earth's stratosphere. However, recent studies have shown that excess amounts of helium could result in substantial imbalances that may prove to be irreversible when compared to other alternatives that are being tested in the field of climate change reversal. With the aid of the Material Science Graduate Fellowship, I would like to develop this research topic in my Ph.D. graduate study.

Introduction Checklist



Make sure the introduction answers the following questions:

- Does her introduction say who she is?
 - Yes! She indirectly mentioned personal details that describe her and her background in research.
- Does her introduction state what she is applying for?
 - Yes! She mentioned that she is applying for a fellowship.
- Does this introduction state why she is applying for the program?
 - Yes! In the introduction, she explains how the fellowship will aid her in conducting research.
- Does this introduction state that Karla is the ideal candidate?
 - Yes! It states that she has graduate level academic knowledge, research experience and knowledge about the research topic she wishes to study.

Example Introduction #3

Here is an example of what an introduction looks like. Pay close attention to the highlighted elements because they constitute the foundation of this section:

When studying business administration, there comes a time when students must specialize in marketing, accounting, and human resources. Once I took my first course, I immediately knew that this would be my field of interest. I have since entered my senior year and have taken all of the core requirements related to human resources. Furthermore, I have also worked for a year as the vice president of the Student Human Resources Association. Given that I have acquired academic and extracurricular experience in this field, I seek to pursue my first professional experience in human resources by applying for this position.

Introduction Checklist



Make sure the introduction answers the following questions:

- Does her introduction say who she is?
 - Yes! She mentioned personal details that describe her and her background further.
- Does her introduction state what she is applying for?
 - Yes! She mentioned that she is applying for an internship.
- Does this introduction state why she is applying for the program?
 - Yes! In the introduction, she explains that since she already has academic and extracurricular knowledge, the next step for her is to gain professional experience.
- Does this introduction state that Shirley is the ideal candidate?
 - Yes! It states that she has graduate level academic and extracurricular knowledge.

Personal Statement Body



In the body of the essay, candidates must provide the following information:

- Past academic and/or professional experiences
- Their current skillset
- Their long-term academic or professional goals

Body Outline

Body paragraphs for a doctoral degree in Urban Planning

- Paragraph #1 Evidence of past experiences
 - Noteworthy courses taken as an undergraduate student
 - Research published in academic magazines and/or participating in conferences
 - 1 year of work experience as a civil planner
- Paragraph #2: Their current skillset
 - Academic prowess acquired from coursework
 - Research and writing skills acquired from past experiences
 - Professional and people skills acquired from first job
- Paragraph #3: Long-term professional goals
 - Explain in detail, how admission to this program will help achieve long-term goals

Body Checklist



Make sure the outline answers the following questions:

- Does it mention any past academic and/or professional experiences?
 - Yes! All past experiences are highlighted in green.
- Does it talk about the candidate's current skillset?
 - Yes! The skillset is contained in the second paragraph section of the outline.
- Does it discuss the candidate's long-term academic or professional goals?
 - Yes! It is mentioned in the last part of the body outline.

Body Outline

Body paragraphs for a STEM research grant

- Paragraph #1: Evidence of past experiences
 - Noteworthy research conducted as an undergraduate student
 - Research published in academic magazines and/or participating in conferences
- Paragraph #2: They current skillset
 - Academic prowess that acquired from coursework
 - Research and writing skills acquired from past experiences
 - Professional and people skills acquired from research work
- Paragraph #3: Long-term professional goals
 - Explain in detail, how admission to this program will help achieve long-term academic/professional goals

Body Checklist



Make sure the outline answers the following questions:

- Does it mention any past academic and/or professional experiences?
 - Yes! All past experiences are highlighted in green.
- Does it talk about the candidate's current skillset?
 - Yes! The skillset is contained in the second paragraph section of the outline.
- Does it discuss the candidate's long-term academic or professional goals?
 - Yes! It is mentioned in the last part of the body outline.

Body Outline

Body paragraphs for a first job in Human Resources

- Paragraph #1: Evidence of past experiences
 - Noteworthy courses taken related to human resources
 - Experience as a coordinator of activities in a human resources association
 - Internship experience
- Paragraph #2: Their current skillset
 - Academic/professional prowess
 - Interpersonal skills acquired from past experiences
 - Technical skills acquired from an internship
- Paragraph #3: Long-term professional goals
 - Discuss in detail, the possible employment benefits derived from this position.

Body Checklist



Make sure the outline answers the following questions:

- Does it mention any past academic and/or professional experiences?
 - Yes! All past experiences are highlighted in green.
- Does it talk about the candidate's current skillset?
 - Yes! The skillset is contained in the second paragraph section of the outline.
- Does it discuss the candidate's long-term academic or professional goals?
 - Yes! It is mentioned in the last part of the body outline.

Conclusion Outline



In the conclusion of the personal statement, the candidate must:

- State key points made in the development paragraphs.
 - This is done to underscore the most important qualities of the candidate.
- Reiterate academic, intellectual and professional collaboration, preparation and experience.

Example Conclusion #1

Here is an example of what a conclusion looks like. Pay close attention to the highlighted elements because they constitute the foundation of this section:

I aspire to study Urban Planning at Brown University because, in short, I believe that I possess the qualities that Brown University requires from its candidates. I have the necessary theoretical knowledge, experience conducting research, and one year of professional experience. Due to my background, I have a skillset that enables me to maximize all of the resources that the doctoral program offers its alumni. Furthermore, because my long-term research interests are aligned with the program's faculty, I believe that Brown University is where I should pursue this academic goal. For these reasons, I believe that I am the ideal candidate for admission to the Urban Planning doctoral program.

Conclusion Checklist



Make sure the conclusion answers the following questions:

- Does it state key points made in the development paragraphs?
 - Yes! There are sentences that discuss the candidates experience, skillset and long-term aspirations.
- Does it reiterate academic, intellectual and professional collaboration, preparation and experience?
 - Yes! The conclusion suggests that the candidate possesses the required qualities.

Example Conclusion #2

Here is an example of what a conclusion looks like. Pay close attention to the highlighted elements because they constitute the foundation of this section:

In the long run, I wish to continue research in the field of climate change reversal. It is imperative that we channel all resources to find a solution before its too late. Throughout my research career, I have studied aerosolized molecular composites that divert sun rays away from the Earth's atmosphere both from an academic standpoint, by being up to date with cutting-edge literature, and from a research standpoint, by taking every opportunity I was given at the subgraduate and graduate level to conduct investigations in this particular field. With the aid of the Material Science Graduate Fellowship, I aim to continue my work in this field and hope that the grant becomes a steppingstone that will lead me to new research opportunities.

Conclusion Checklist



Make sure the conclusion answers the following questions:

- Does it state key points made in the development paragraphs?
 - Yes! She summarized important details such as the research topics she has specialized in and the investigations she has conducted throughout her academic career.
- Does it reiterate academic, intellectual and professional collaboration, preparation and experience?
 - Yes! The conclusion denotes that the candidate has each of the qualities in question.

Example Conclusion #3



Here is an example of what a conclusion looks like. Pay close attention to the highlighted elements because they constitute the foundation of this section:

My academic and extracurricular experiences as a human resources student, coordinator of student association activities, and recruitment intern have equipped me with the initiative, passion, competency, and commitment necessary to succeed in this profession. I strongly believe that Caribbean Talent Solutions will benefit from an employee like myself and I will in turn have the opportunity to put everything I have learned thus far into practice and grow within the company as a professional.

Conclusion Checklist



Make sure the conclusion answers the following questions:

- Does it state key points made in the development paragraphs?
 - Yes! Her first sentence provides a succinct summary of key points initially made in the development paragraphs.
- Does it reiterate academic, intellectual and professional collaboration, preparation and experience?
 - Yes! The conclusion suggests that the candidate possesses the required qualities.

The Do's of a Personal Statement

- Concentrate on your development topics.
- Start with your interest in the field that you're studying.
- Explain why you chose to pursue a career in this area.
- Be concise and specific.
- Be enthusiastic about your field of study.
- Start with an outline.
- Leave the introduction for the end.

Additional Do's



- Align the content of the personal statement to the particularities of the position that one seeks. If the candidate is applying for a research grant, every topic must be strongly aligned to research.
- Candidates who don't have a lot of experience should concentrate on the experience that they do have and underscore these experiences in detail.
- Candidates who have too much experience should remove excess information in order of least to most important until they have a more concise amount of content.
- Submit the personal statement as early as possible.

Additional Do's



- STEM students must address the following two topics:
 - Intellectual merits
 - You must highlight the intellectual contributions that your research has provided to your field of study.
 - Broader Impacts
 - You must explain in detail how your research will benefit society.

The Don'ts of a Personal Statement

- Concentrate initially, too much on the Introduction.
- Be arrogant.
- Stretch the truth.
- Use clichés that are intended to enhance your appeal to a selection committee.
- Use informal register.
- Implore.

Final/General Personal Statement Checklist

Introduction:

- Who you are?
- What you are applying for?
- Why you are applying for it?
- What makes you the ideal candidate?

Body

- Did you discuss your past academic and/or professional experiences?
- Did you mention your current skillset?
- Did you write about your long-term academic or professional goals?

Conclusion

- Did you summarize key points made in the development paragraphs?
- Did you reaffirm that you are the ideal candidate?

Final/General Personal Statement Checklist

Is there any additional prompt that should be addressed?

Have you checked grammar?

Have you checked your word choice?

Is the statement written in a formal register?

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

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