



Your Personal Statement

Your personal statement is the opportunity for **you** to demonstrate that you have the enthusiasm and aptitude required to be a successful student and practitioner. It's a short document, and you'll be submitting the same version to every medical school, so it's important that you think about it carefully. This document will tell you what the Leeds Admissions Team look for in a personal statement. Most medical schools are looking for evidence of the same attributes, but you should read the guidance provided by any other school to which you are applying as well as this!

General principles

The personal statement tells us about you. Try to make the statement as specific and personal as you can. Whenever possible only make claims which can be verified. Avoid making "tick-box" lists, but do show us what your experiences meant to you. And don't waste space telling us things we already know; the personal statement box doesn't have a lot to spare!

FOR EXAMPLE, DO SAY

"I volunteered at The Bledlow Centre, a respite care home, one day every weekend for 18 months. I learnt a lot, both from patients and (when I felt out of my depth) from the staff and other volunteers."

Accurate spelling and grammar are of paramount importance. You have plenty of time to prepare and perfect your statement before submission, so any errors which slip through make it look as if you haven't taken much care over it – which doesn't look attractive to an Admissions Team.

Be especially careful to avoid plagiarism i.e. the words must be your own. There are two important reasons for this. Firstly, a personal statement must be personal, i.e. it must be about you. A plagiarized statement only tells us about someone else. Secondly, plagiarism (presenting the work of another person as your own) is a form of

BUT DON'T SAY

"I did some volunteering at a care home. Demonstrating a caring nature is important for a doctor."

dishonesty, something we do not regard as an attractive quality in applicants. UCAS put all applications through similarity detection tests, which identify statements that have been copied from another source. Don't be tempted to copy another person's application materials, or download your personal statement from a website. We are likely to reject any such application immediately.

Other sources of information

There are many sources of information to help you to write your personal statement. The UCAS site contains a lot of useful information but bear in mind that it is generic information, intended for applicants to all courses. You should tailor your personal statement to highlight information of interest to medical schools. See <http://www.ucas.com/students/applying/howtoapply/personalstatement/> for further guidance.

The University of Leeds is committed to improving access to all our course, including medicine, via a range of Widening Access and Foundation programmes. Our WAMS Team (Widening Access to Medical School) run a useful website at <http://www.wanttobeadoctor.co.uk/>

"Applicants should demonstrate some understanding of what a career in medicine involves and their understanding of, and suitability for, a caring profession. Applicants may draw on relevant work experience, either paid or voluntary, in health or related areas, to demonstrate this understanding. Medical schools recognise that practical experience in hospices and residential homes, or domestic caring responsibilities, is equally appropriate as work in a conventional healthcare setting such as a hospital or GP surgery. More important than the experience itself is the ability to demonstrate an understanding of the relevant skills and attributes the profession requires by reflecting upon and drawing on any experience you may have."

Medical Schools Council 2013

<http://www.medschools.ac.uk/Students/howtoapply/Pages/Work-experience.aspx>

There are also many internet fora and chat rooms populated by current and prior applicants, all willing to offer advice. These are good places for discussions, but be wary of any sweeping statements which you encounter. The contributors to these discussions will have limited experience on which to base their opinions and a lot of things “everybody knows” turn out not to be true! No medical school issues misleading information and we are as open as we can be without risking the integrity of the applications process – rather like an exam board who will tell you the syllabus, but not which actual questions will be in this year’s A-level papers. Our web-site has a lot of information, and we’ll be updating the Frequently Asked Questions throughout the year. (Assuming people ask questions. If you want to ask one, go to www.leeds.ac.uk/medicine/admissions/)

What do we want to read?

Your insight into a career in medicine

The Medical Schools Council has agreed that candidates should have obtained some experience of what a career in medicine involves.

Avoid cliché statements and be realistic and honest. Remember that prospective statements are very difficult to mark- we are all full of good intentions and so try to concentrate on what you have already achieved. What did you learn and why has it helped make you more confident about your decision to study medicine?

The School recognises that experience in such a setting is increasingly difficult to obtain. Think not only of the typical healthcare settings but also of alternatives including hospices, nursing homes or pharmacies. If attempts to gain relevant work experience have been unsuccessful make reference to this within the statement.

If you are successful in gaining an interview, contact details of supervisors/managers are required for all relevant work experience placements. Note that as a condition of any offer, relevant work experience may be verified and deception in amount or type of work experience could result in an offer being withdrawn.

There has been a recent expansion in the literature and courses aimed at prospective medical students. Applicants should use this to find out more information about their choice of career and be realistic about the future. Give some indication of how you informed yourself. Overall, the type of experience is much less important than what you have learned from it and how it has helped

shape you. We do not give any extra marks to candidates who have attended one of the courses that require you to pay a fee.

This is also a good chance to mention any other academic achievements you may have that fall outside traditional GCSE/A levels e.g. awards, prizes and additional academic achievements if they are relevant to your career choice. This could include your extended essay. It is also a chance to mention anything that may have affected your level of achievement.

Evidence that you can take responsibility

Doctors carry a huge responsibility for their patients and applicants should be able to demonstrate that they have begun to develop this aspect of their character. Demonstration of responsibility through paid employment, within school, and through family or leisure activities are desirable.

Evidence of Social and Cultural Awareness

Before embarking on a career so dependent on interacting with all members of society, usually under difficult situations, it is useful for applicants to have some experience on a regular basis of society beyond their immediate environment. Preferably this experience should have been gained over a period of several months, and it is not necessarily required to be directly related to medicine. This may help applicants to reflect on health and healthcare in the wider community. Many applicants gain this insight through work experience, voluntary work, part-time employment and organised community schemes. Activities connected to, and independent of school, are given equal merit.

Your Interests, Activities and Achievements

The School believes that people who have developed interests outside their career and who try to lead a balanced life are more likely to be effective medical practitioners. Also, we encourage students to contribute to the sporting, artistic, cultural and community aspects of the University. Successful applicants will have found time to pursue non-academic interests whilst still meeting the necessary academic requirements.

What don't we want to read?

FOR EXAMPLE, DON'T SAY

"I have 12 GCSE A grades and am predicted three A's at A level." That information is elsewhere on your UCAS application.*

The area for your personal statement is limited. Don't waste space by telling us things we already know.

In most cases, we want to hear what you have done, not what you plan to do, or would like to do.

FOR EXAMPLE, DON'T SAY

"Next year, I'm going to spend some time in Ecuador, digging wells for villages with no clean drinking water"

This is highly commendable – but you haven't done it, so we can't reward you for having done so.

One exception to this suggestion relates to work experience. We know it can be difficult to get experience in time before the application deadline, so if you have work experienced arranged which you have not yet done, do tell us about it. But be aware that we will ask about it, if you are invited to interview, so if it has to be cancelled you should let us know as soon as possible.

BUT YOU COULD SAY

"This year, I spent one Saturday every month doing sponsored push-ups to raise money so that next year I can go to Ecuador to dig wells for villages with no clean drinking water"

Try to avoid general statements—"Medicine is a career which involves life-long learning." - unless you explain why that applies to **you** specifically. "Medicine is a career which involves life-long learning and I have always loved learning new things." If a comment doesn't tell us about **you**, it probably doesn't belong in your personal statement.

We don't want to read what your cousin put on their successful application last year, or something you found on-line or in a book. We really can't stress how important it is that **your** personal statement is about **you**. UCAS will submit your application to a software similarity check, so unoriginal text will be recognised and we would not be able to process your application any further.

What now?

This is your chance to tell us about yourself. Grab a pencil and a sheet of a paper. Or turn on your computer and start a new document, if that's how you like to work. Or pick up a pack of Post-It notes and find a blank wall. We can't decide what will work for you, because we don't know you.

So tell us what you're like...

Life-span of this document

This guide has been prepared to assist students applying in 2013/14 for admission to the course in September 2014. While School policy usually remains broadly unchanged from year to year, you should NOT assume that any details contained in this guide will necessarily apply to later years. If you are considering applying, you should always make sure you have the current version of all documents. These will be always be available on our Open days or by download from our website <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/medicine/admissions/>

External Web Addresses

The School of Medicine has no control over website outside the domain www.leeds.ac.uk/medicine. All URLs used in this document were checked prior to printing but may since have changed. A clickable list of all mentioned URLs is available at <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/medicine/admissions/> and we will attempt to keep it up-to-date.