

WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

**THE HOW'S, THE WHEN'S,
AND THE WHATNOTS**



WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT

AND WHY DOES IT MATTER...

MORE THAN JUST AN INTRODUCTION...



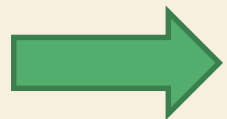
At its most basic level, a personal statement is a written description of your academic achievements, and a description of why a particular university should be interested in having you join their program.



However, a personal statement should also be thought of as an opportunity to express the kind of mutual relationship you are willing to embark on, between yourself and the department of your choice.



Use this space to convey to them why their department *specifically* is an ideal environment to develop your academic interests, and how you intend to represent and support their department as well, whether that be research ventures, presenting on behalf of the university at various conferences, publishing to academic journals, applying for research grants, and/or working with various faculty members.



Remember, you will not have an exorbitant page availability to detail your personal statement, thus, you will need to prioritize your most top-tier information as cleanly as possible. Avoid cramming too many details into one short space and risk having your main points muddled, clarity is key.

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HOW TO WRITE A PERSONAL STATEMENT...

AND WHAT TO INCLUDE...

FORMATTING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

- Section One: Who are you?
 - Use this space to literally introduce yourself.
 - What brought you to your specific chosen field?
 - This would be the best time to introduce any *brief* anecdotes that may have led your choice of academics/career into this direction.
 - Include your education, work experience, volunteer work, etc. in order to build your persona as a strong applicant for this particular program.
 - If you are applying for a program that is not directly related to the degree that you received as an undergraduate, here would be the space to explain your metamorphosis on how you came to the decision to apply to this program, and how you intend to use your former education to assist you in this regard, how any other experience may assist you in this new direction, and how you intend to bridge any potential shortcomings if accepted to this new department.
 - As part of CSUSB university policy, students are eligible to apply for a graduate program with a minimum of a 2.5 GPA. However, many of our programs require a higher GPA for admission into their program. If you do find yourself in the position where you meet university requirements for entry but perhaps not program requirements, here would also be a good place to explain your lower GPA and what circumstances have changed to suggest that your current GPA may not be indicative of the type of work you would produce as a graduate student.

HOW TO FORMAT YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

- Section Two: Why this Program?
 - Graduate programs often want to feel that you have selected to apply for their program specifically, though not necessarily exclusively, for tangible, concrete reasons. Use this space to convey that you have a familiarity with their program.
 - As a graduate student, you will also need to redefine the relationship you will have between yourself and the department you would like to be admitted to. You will be held to a higher level of academic standard than an undergraduate, and you will need to show that admitting you to their program will be mutually beneficial to them as well as to you.
 - Become familiar with specific faculty members that are doing work you are interested in, cite courses that you believe would be especially helpful for your long-term academic/professional development, reference specific prospects within this program that you would be excited about (such as TA opportunities, internship opportunities, etc.).
 - Many programs may also want to hear from their applicants to acknowledge that graduate school will be a large commitment, in your time, your energy, and your ability to attend to other priorities in your life such as jobs, families, etc. Use a few sentences to explain how you plan to handle the stress and commitments of this program logistically, as well as any activities that you partake in that will aid in your continued mental and physical wellbeing (yoga, reading, etc.).

HOW TO FORMAT YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

- Section Three: Looking to the Future
 - In this portion of your Personal Statement, you should give a tentative outline of your professional career path that you see ahead of yourself after earning this graduate degree.
 - This section need not be ironclad, as graduate school should be a time for the specifics of your future career/focus to shift and develop as you find yourself working deeper in this field.
 - However, having a loosely defined future that you see yourself moving towards, will give the program of your choosing some assurance that this degree is part of a larger plan for yourself and that, upon graduation, they will have produced a capable, self-assured
 - What do you see yourself becoming? What impact do you hope to have on your organization, field, and community? Remember that this is not written in stone, and no one will revoke your degree if you change your mind or life takes you in a different direction. The program will simply want to know that you have a broad understanding of where you want to go and what that will mean not only to yourself but to others.



PERSONAL STATEMENT WRITING TIPS

THE DO'S AND THE DO NOT'S

TIPS, ADVICE, AND GUIDANCE

- Include prime content
 - Your statement should not deviate from the point of the narrative, but including the best highlights of your education, experience, etc. should definitely be included. You should think of this as your own personal dossier.
- Avoid repeating information
 - If you are particularly proud of your performance in a specific course for example, and it directly relates to the program, feel free to touch on that. However, avoid reporting your grades in details. They will see this on your transcripts.
- Show familiarity
 - Conveying that you have done sufficient research on the program, faculty, university, etc. will show that you have clearly given them their due consideration when applying to their department. Ensure you have done the work in considering them, before they do the work of considering you.
- Use graduate-level writing
 - You may not have earned a degree in English per say, but any program will expect you to exhibit strong writing skills. Ensure that your personal statement is both clear/concise, as well as free from grammatical/syntax errors.
- Most importantly, answer their questions
 - Many programs will have an outline of guidelines they expect from their applicants' personal statements. This may include the length of the document, specific questions they want addressed, and so forth. These guidelines should **absolutely** be minded when completing your personal statement. If this means that not every bit of your anecdotes/experiences will fit within the page limit, always defer to their questions/information first and foremost.

FOR EXAMPLE...

This is the current requirements from the School of Social Work that is asked of their MSW applicants. As you can see, they have particular requirements for the length of the document, how it is typed, as well as eight questions that they specifically want answered.

This information can be found in their “Program Materials” section of their Cal State Apply Application, as many often are housed here. You can also check on the department webpage of the program you are interested for listed guidelines as well.

In order to have a successful application, follow the specific instructions of your program carefully, and be ready to reach out to them with any questions.

PERSONAL STATEMENT AND VIGNETTES

Required of all applicants and will be used to assess your written communication skills and to evaluate your knowledge of your career choice, your availability to complete field hours and your commitment to the social work profession. Failure to address all prompts will affect your overall application.

PERSONAL STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER GOALS

A four to six page typewritten, double spaced statement is required. In your statement, discuss the following:

- ✓ Experiences and/or relationships that have influenced your selection of social work as your professional career (e.g. family, education, volunteer work, paid, employment, recipient of social services, etc.)
- ✓ How would a social work education and career will be of value to you?
- ✓ The values that are intrinsic to the profession of social work and personal experiences that demonstrate your understanding and acceptance of such values.
- ✓ Your understanding of the responsibilities of the social work profession and the role and responsibilities that you wish to assume as a professional social worker.
- ✓ Describe your experience with people of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and lifestyles.
- ✓ Describe any emotional or physical characteristics or limitations which should be considered in planning for your social work training.
- ✓ Your reasons for selecting the MSW Program at California State University, San Bernardino.
- ✓ What plans have you made for completing the program? Consider finances, time management, etc. Indicate your access to a computer and your plan (if necessary) to learn word processing and the use of the internet before you begin the program. Include a plan for the full time or part time program showing that you understand the time demands of the program and how you intend to deal with them.
- ✓ Statement of Field Plan: Refer to instructions on Statement of Field Plan Instruction Sheet
- ✓ Pathway Distance Education applicants must also complete the “*Additional Personal Statement*” questions.

VIGNETTES

Typewritten on separate pages from the personal statement.

Draw from your own paid employment, volunteer work, or personal experiences to provide illustrations of how you handled similar situation as noted in (a) and (b) below. Make sure not to use names or information that might violate the confidentiality of the individuals you decide to use in your descriptions. For both (a) and (b), explain how you may have grown or learned from the experiences you describe.

- a) Clearly describe a situation where you were confronted with a value or ethical conflict. How did you resolve it? What were some of the factors you considered in making your decision?
- b) Discuss a difficult or dangerous situation you encountered. How did you handle the situation? What would you do differently in the future? Are there any situations in which you would feel particularly vulnerable as a student? How would you expect the School of Social Work to assist your education and skill building concerns in order to handle that type of situation?



RESOURCES TO HELP YOU...

REVIEW, QUESTIONS, INFORMATION

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP WITH YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

- Graduate Studies Application Workshops
 - We will be holding these workshops throughout the remainder of the academic year, and they all will include a component of personal statement assistance. Please note that you are eligible to attend more than one if need be.
- Graduate Studies One-on-One Appointments
 - Office of Graduate Studies staff member, Megan Kinnally, is available to make a one-on-one appointment with to go over your personal statement. Please note that these appointments are LIMITED and can only be booked if 1) You have a rough draft of a personal statement ready for her to review, 2) You have identified your program's personal statement requirements and can provide those to her alongside your rough draft, and 3) As her calendar permits appointments. As we receive hundreds of application per term, it will not be possible for her to meet with each candidate, so please be flexible in your time/date availability as well as ready to utilize other resources if an appointment cannot be made. Please see one of our staff members for her contact information.
- CSUSB Writing Centers
 - The Writing Center on campus is available to all current CSUSB students (as their student fees allot this resource to them) and they are available to bring your Personal Statement to them to review their writing for clarity, grammar, etc.
 - They are open Mon-Thurs: 8:30 AM to 8:00 PM and Friday: 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.
 - They can be reached at (909) 537-3077 and their website is <https://www.csusb.edu/writing-center>
- Graduate Programs
 - If you have questions regarding your Personal Statement, please free to contact the department you are applying to, and ask for assistance in clarifying any questions or concerns you may have. You can view a list of department contacts and phone numbers on the Graduate Studies webpage organized by college: <https://www.csusb.edu/graduate-studies/prospective-students/programs-degrees/department-contacts>

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**ANY
QUESTIONS?**