

The Personal Statement supports the admissions selection process. While admissions committees at different schools place varying weight on these narrative submissions, they all want to learn more about each applicant and his/her motivation to study medicine. The Personal Statement demonstrates the applicant's ability to reflect on his/her life with perspective and to communicate well in a written format.

An effective personal statement will illuminate each applicant's distinctive background, experience, motivation, and preparation for study in a medical field. To begin, review your responses in the Reflection Journal. Here are some possible approaches:

1. Focus on a central theme that demonstrates your personal contribution to your community and the world. Show how that theme prevails across different experiences.
2. Pick one to three responses in the Reflection Journal and develop them, using concrete examples from important experiences or events in your life.
3. Pick a single response in the Reflection Journal. Reflect on the question you answered and refine the question so your response sheds the best light on your own experience. Deepen the focus and expand the breadth of that response.

Applicants will prepare a succession of personal statements throughout the admissions process. Here are the most common ones:

Health Careers Evaluation Committee (HCEC) Personal Statement

This statement carries no specific length constraints. Usually applicants write about two pages, but it could be as short as one page or as long as five pages. There is no specific topic for the HCEC Personal Statement, but it should address a response to the question: *What should the HCEC know about you that will help them produce a comprehensive HCEC Letter?*

The HCEC Personal Statement is an opportunity for registrants to begin developing how to portray themselves effectively in a distilled narrative form. The statements submitted later during the application process may or may not reflect the HCEC Personal Statement, as thoughts and attitudes evolve throughout the admissions cycle. It might be considered a practice draft for the eventual statement to medical schools.

The HCEC Personal Statement is used by Committee members and HCEC staff. It is not sent to medical schools. The HCEC does not quote directly from the Personal Statement in the HCEC Letter.

Application service (AMCAS, AACOMAS, AADSAS, OPTOMCAS, etc.) statements

Some application services require narrative statements. The services send the statements to the applicant's designated schools. These statements must be generic in nature, since many different schools will evaluate them. Statements of this kind must be polished compositions that adhere to length and topical constraints.

Composing Personal Statements for Admission to Schools of Human Medicine

Individual school's secondary or supplementary application essays

After receipt of contact information, or a verified primary application from the service, many schools will request applicants to complete a supplementary application for their school, which may include writing additional statements. These statements allow applicants to address their motivation for attending that specific school.

Resources and Tips:

For more information on personal statements, view the session slides “Writing Personal Statements for Applications” on our web site, career.cornell.edu/resources/media/health.cfm.

The CCS Library in 103 Barnes Hall has reference books containing sample statements.

For composition help, take a draft of your statement to the Walk-in Service of the Writing Workshop. The tutors will read your materials, make suggestions, and question you in order to guide your writing process.

To discover problems in the flow of words, ask someone to read the statement aloud. Pauses and hesitations by the reader indicate problems with the clarity of the idea presented or the writing.

For an opinion on the topic and its relevance to your admissions outlook, see a health careers advisor.

For comment on the quality of your final draft, ask an unbiased person familiar with current medical school admissions to give a candid assessment.

IMPORTANT: After completion, save a .pdf of your personal statement for your records by clicking on the appropriate link in the HCEC Online Checklist.