

UCAS Personal Statements for Medicine or Dentistry

Introduction

A typical medical school may receive 2,500 – 3,000+ UCAS forms and only interview around 25% of applicants. Although the UCAS application form is only one part of the admissions process, and with medical and dental schools placing increasing emphasis on the admissions tests results, you should still put effort into writing your UCAS form to ensure your application is effective.

Some sections of the UCAS form are purely factual (name, address, exam results, etc) but there is also the opportunity to write about yourself in the form of a personal statement. This is designed to help admissions teams discover more about you and your suitability for the course. It is your chance to distinguish yourself from the other applicants by presenting your goals, experiences and qualifications in the best possible light, and to demonstrate your writing ability. If you are a mature applicant, a small number of schools may ask you to supply a CV or application form in addition to the UCAS form, check requirements with schools.

Preparing to apply

The key to writing an effective personal statement is to prepare thoroughly. Think carefully about what you have to offer, in the context of what the dental or medical school is looking for. Make contact with admissions teams if you have any questions - initiative is often appreciated.

Academic requirements

When applying for medicine or dentistry as a second degree, you will need to have (or be about to gain) a good honours degree and sound A-level results (or equivalent qualifications). Some schools will also require good GCSE grades. Always check on the medical or dental school's website for specifics.

Personal qualities

What personal qualities do you possess? In particular, dental and medical schools will be looking for:

- Strong academic ability, self-discipline, motivation and enthusiasm (for medicine / dentistry)
- Commitment to caring for others; compassion
- Communication skills and ability to establish rapport with a wide cross section of society
- Integrity and a professional attitude
- Teamwork, leadership and acceptance of responsibility, perseverance
- Ability to cope with ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty
- Ability to deal effectively with stress
- Commitment to your personal and professional development
- IT skills (increasingly important e.g. computerised records and digital imaging)
- Manual dexterity (especially for dentistry) and the ability to maintain intense, prolonged concentration

Think carefully about what evidence you have to demonstrate your qualities (good self-insight itself is a quality that admissions teams seek!). Your evidence could come from your current studies, work experience, previous employment including part-time jobs and a wide range of outside interests.

Relevant & recent work experience and workplace observations

Recent, hands-on work experience in a caring profession, such as in a dental practice, GP surgery, hospital, care home or hospice is vital. Not only does this demonstrate your concern for the welfare of others but also helps you gain an insight



into the work of a dentist / doctor, even if your role was as a nursing auxiliary or receptionist. You should also try to work shadow (or at least talk to) dentists / doctors in different clinical settings to gain an understanding of their role. For more work experience suggestions, read the Careers Service information sheet [Health Related Volunteering in Sheffield](#).

Understanding medicine / dentistry as a career

Why do you want to do medicine / dentistry? Think about this carefully before you apply so that you can provide your reasons in such a way as to show that you have actively chosen this as a career. Be prepared to demonstrate what you have done to find out about the profession and why this is a good career for you. Think about why you are applying as a graduate and how this may be an advantage. Brush up on your knowledge of the profession and current issues. Think about the science of medicine / dentistry and what have been the most important advances. Have these influenced you? In what way?

Writing your personal statement

When you write your personal statement, put yourself in the shoes of the admissions tutors and write about what is going to be relevant to them. Bearing in mind that they may not have long to read your personal statement, start with a strong opening paragraph to grab the reader's attention.

Try to be original in what you write throughout your statement. Keep the whole thing succinct yet meaningful and within word limits. Use language which reflects your motivation. Amongst others things:

- explain why you want to be a doctor / dentist & that you know what it involves
- demonstrate your commitment to caring and a career in medicine / dentistry
- describe your participation in University and community life
- highlight your achievements and evidence personal qualities that will make you a good doctor or dentist
- describe your hobbies and interests
- be positive about your first degree and how this will help you undertake your second degree
- try to show how you share the values of the NHS (as stated in the NHS Constitution)

Remember that not only do admissions tutors want to know about your experiences but what you have got out of them and how this makes you an excellent candidate.

Spell and grammar check your personal statement and get a second opinion from your tutor or an adviser at the Careers Service if you need help. **Keep a copy**, as it is likely to be referred to during your interview.

A note on references

Your referee would normally be your academic/personal tutor. Give them plenty of notice when you ask them to be your referee (ie, before the summer vacation) and brief them fully about the course(s) you are applying for and your 'selling points'. Make sure they have a copy of your personal statement.

Useful resources

- [UCAS](#) has a guide to applying
- Individual medical and dental schools may provide suggestions on their website to help you when writing your personal statement
- Look out for books such as 'Getting into Medical School' by James Barton and 'Getting into Dental School' by Adam Cross
- Professional bodies including [British Medical Association](#) and [General Medical Council](#) for medicine and [British Dental Association](#) and [General Dental Council](#) for dentistry
- [Prospects \(healthcare\)](#) and [NHS Healthcare Careers](#) for job profiles which include details of skills and attributes needed for various healthcare careers