

How to write a personal statement

When you apply to graduate school, potential supervisors are not only interested in your grades and other academic markers, they also want to know something about your research background, current research interests, and what you would like to do with a graduate degree. Your personal statement is the place to provide such information.

The main points that you should elaborate in your statement are:

- 1) ***Your past research experience.*** What projects have you worked on as an undergraduate student, graduate student, and/or research assistant? What were your responsibilities in these projects and what did you learn? Were the results of these projects presented at a meeting or in a publication? How did your experience from working on these projects shape your interest in psychology?
- 2) ***Other relevant experience.*** You may list courses that you took or other experiences which excited your interest in research and graduate school. Likewise important would be to mention experiences through which you acquired skills (e.g., interviewing, programming) that you consider relevant for your academic goals.
- 3) ***Your current research interests.*** Research in the Psychology Department clusters around six areas: Clinical Psychology, Cognitive Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience, Developmental Psychology, Health Psychology, Quantitative Psychology, and Personality and Social Psychology. A description of these areas can be found here: <https://fass.nus.edu.sg/psy/areas-of-specialization/> and a list of staff members and their research interests can be found here: <https://fass.nus.edu.sg/psy/faculty/>. Please identify one or two of these areas and think of two or three research topics within a given area that you would like to pursue as a graduate student. You should check whether any of the faculty listed for a particular area conduct research on your topics of interest and thus could supervise your work. If you are uncertain about this, please feel free to contact relevant individuals to discuss a potential overlap of interests with them. In your personal statement please specify your preferred research area(s), your topics of interest, and at least three individuals with whom you would like to work. Indicate your preferences by rank-ordering these individuals.
- 4) ***Career goals.*** Why do you hope to obtain a graduate degree? What are your career goals after graduate school and why do you consider NUS a good place to support you in these goals?

When preparing your statement, please be clear and concise. A typical statement is about 2 pages long. For more information and tips on how to write a successful personal statement please see Bottoms and Nysse (1999). This can be downloaded from http://www.kon.org/bottoms_nysse.html.

Reference:

Bottoms, B.L. & Nysse, K.L. (1999). Writing a compelling personal statement. *Eye on Psi Chi*, 4(1), 20-22.