

PERFECT YOUR MEDICINE PERSONAL STATEMENT

2021 EDITION



*A comprehensive guide to writing your
Medicine personal statement*

WE ARE MEDICS





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Introduction

Welcome!

This Personal Statement eBook has been designed to equip you with the knowledge and skills necessary, to master your personal statement. We will provide you with top tips, reflective examples, and specific advice to guide you through writing your personal statement. We have also included a number of successful personal statements as examples for you to read.

This booklet has been created with love by the We Are Medics team, tag us on Instagram – we would love to see you using it!

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Survey and Disclaimer

Survey



A survey is available [here](#), this will allow you to leave a short review on the quality of the eBook once you have read this guide.

Completing this survey is a way of supporting us, and we can use the results to secure more funding, which will allow us to create more exciting opportunities for you.

Disclaimer

This advice is based on personal experience, and we cannot guarantee a successful UCAS application to study medicine based on it. However, as current medical students we believe it is high quality information.

We do not support or endorse any company or individual which charges money for support during the medical application process. We strongly believe that this advice and information should be available for free.



Therefore, we do not support or endorse paid-for personal statement writing courses, workshops, guides, or review services. We believe this eBook is a comprehensive guide to writing the ultimate personal statement for your medicine application. We have linked to free resources to support your application where possible and provided a checklist for you to use when reviewing your personal statement.

Any external content we recommend may contain adverts or suggest you need to purchase paid-for resources. We do not support such adverts or claims.

In this eBook, we have included either extracts or whole personal statements for you to read, review and analyse. Please be careful not to plagiarise any



personal statements you read in this eBook or elsewhere online – UCAS will detect this.

What is the Personal Statement?

The personal statement is a required aspect of the UCAS application. It is an opportunity for you to outline your motivations to study a particular course at university and explain how you have sought to develop the skills and qualities which indicate your suitability for the course. A personal statement should be personal to you – it should showcase *your talents, experiences, and skills*. This is why there is not one formula to writing a great personal statement. Whilst there are tips and tricks to enhance the content and your writing style, your personal statement must be a true reflection of your journey.

What are the requirements?

- Maximum of 4000 characters
- Maximum of 47 lines
- Submitted by the early deadline of 15th October (for medicine/dentistry/Oxbridge applicants)

For more information about the requirements of the personal statement, visit [here](#).

Preparing your Medicine Personal Statement

Your personal statement is not only an opportunity to demonstrate your motivations for studying medicine, but also to convey a sense of insight into medicine as a career. It is a chance to reflect on your experiences thus far and outline your personal qualities which will enable you to excel as both a medical student and future doctor.



Developing an understanding about the roles and responsibilities of a doctor will help you prepare your personal statement with ease. Volunteering in your local community and undertaking work experience placements are examples of activities which may allow you to gain a deeper insight into medicine. However, reading official resources such as those produced by the General Medical



Council (GMC) before you even begin to think about the content of your personal statement, can help to give your writing a clear focus and direction.

We recommend that you have a read and make a note of the qualities discussed in each of the following resources before writing your personal statement.

- [MSC - Statement on the core values and attributes needed to study medicine](#) – An excellent resource published by the Medical Schools Council (MSC) which clearly outlines the values, skills and qualities expected of prospective medical students.
- [GMC - Good Medical Practice](#) – this is a must-read document outlining all the essential values and principles that doctors should uphold in their practice and is something that is deeply integrated in medical education from the very beginning. Knowing the essence of this will give you an insight into the goals you would be working towards and the rules you are guided by as a medical student and a doctor in the UK.
- [GMC – Achieving Good Medical Practise](#) – Developed by the General Medical Council, this guidance outlines the values which should be upheld by medical students throughout their education.
- [GMC - Tomorrow's Doctors](#) – similarly to Good Medical Practice, this is also an additional document for you to gain insight into what the end goal of a medical graduate should be. This is where the GMC wants you to be after you have completed your medical degree.



How do medical schools use the Personal Statement?

Your personal statement may be used in the selection process for interviews to a varying degree by each medical school. Having said this, on the whole, personal statements do not feature heavily in the selection process for interview. Whilst this is the case for most medical schools in the UK, a few medical schools will utilise a scoring system to assess the personal statement



at some point in their selection process; either before interview (for interview selection) or at the interview itself. If this is the case for one or more of the universities you intend to apply to, pay careful attention to any details on their website which discuss exactly what the admissions team are looking for in a personal statement. For example, the University of Oxford place a larger emphasis on showing an interest in medical science and academia.

It is important to check exactly how the medical schools you intend to apply to will use your personal statement both before and during the interview. An overview of this information for each medical school in the UK can be found [here](#). To access the most relevant and up-to-date information you should check the websites for each of the medical schools you may apply to. If you have any queries about how your personal statement will be used, or if anything you find on their websites is unclear, email the admissions team directly.



COVID-19 and Work Experience

We are aware that applying to study medicine as a first-time applicant, poses a new set of challenges this year. With fewer in-person work experience placements and volunteering opportunities available, it is understandable to feel concerned as to how this will impact on not only your personal statement but on the success of your application as a whole. We want to assure you that UK medical schools are fully aware of the current situation, and are expecting less in-person work experience from applicants.

It is worth remembering that clinical work experience is not an essential requirement for any medical school, although it would improve your understanding of healthcare if you have the opportunity to gain such experience. Volunteering and work experience of any form may be beneficial for your application, as long as you are able to reflect on your experience and relate it to the role of healthcare professionals. For example, a role where you had the opportunity to communicate to a range of people of all age groups can be used to exemplify how you have been working on your communication skills.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, more virtual work experiences are available for prospective medical students to gain insight about healthcare. Your learning from these experiences can be illustrated in your personal statement in the same way as you would for in-person work experience – through demonstrating focused reflection on what healthcare involves and the role of doctors within the NHS.

Recognising the challenges of finding work experience in the current environment, Medical Schools Council (MSC) have endorsed both of the following virtual work experience modules, actively encouraging you to complete and reflect upon them in your personal statement and interviews.

- [RCGP – Observe GP](#)
- [BSMS Virtual Work Experience](#)

The MSC have also produced a document, which outlines how you can make use of online resources, alternative work experience and volunteering opportunities. You can access this [here](#).

Additional opportunities for work experience:



- [Health Education England Online Work Related-Experience](#) – this opportunity is available to people living in some parts of the country
- [Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital](#)





Planning Ahead

Structuring your Personal Statement

The aim of this section is for you to establish a structure that works for you, by deciding what the main components of your personal statement will be about.

Before diving into finding the best structure for your personal statement, it is important to remember there is no set format or structure. Reading a few example statements

may help to give you an idea of where you start, however it is all about finding the right balance that is appropriate for you. This balance will be based on your personal experiences, and what has been important in shaping your journey towards Medicine.



You should start your personal statement with a clear introduction and end with a conclusion. You can find specific advice on writing the introduction and conclusion, later on in this eBook.

Developing a structure which works for you

Here, we will focus on developing a structure for the **main body** of your personal statement. The importance of having a well-thought-out structure is that it will make your thoughts and experiences easier to follow. A good structure will help in reinforcing the key content of your statement, further giving admissions tutors the impression that you have a focused understanding about medicine and yourself.

There is no one way to structure the main body, in fact there are many ways! The components you discuss will differ according to your experiences, and the weighting given to these components will largely be based on what medical schools you apply to.

Here is an example of how to divide the main body of your personal statement:

- Interest in academia and wider reading



- Work experience and voluntary commitments
- Extra-curricular Activities

Remember, this is only one example. Alternatively, you could base your paragraphs on the qualities *you want to demonstrate*, such as:

- Interest in medicine, science, and academia
- Compassion, communication skills and empathy
- Leadership, teamwork and problem-solving

These ideas are here to prompt you, so work around them based on your experiences. If there is a certain valuable quality, such as resilience, that you are passionate about and have relevant experiences in, of course this should be included!

Activity: How to structure your Personal Statement?

This activity will help you decide which categories you would like to structure the main body of your personal statement, and what you want to include in each of these components.

1. Grab a piece of paper and divide it into the following 3 (suggested) columns:

- Interest in academia and wider reading
- Work experience and voluntary commitments
- Extra-curricular activities

2. Categorise your experiences that you wish to discuss into these columns

- This will help you identify whether your experiences fit into these themes.
- If you find this structure is not right for you, you can try a different way, such as instead categorising experiences into their relevant skills and qualities.

2. With a highlighter, choose the points most important to you from each column

- This will help you select what to write about in each section.
- You may find you have lots of experiences to discuss but cannot include all of them in the required detail. Narrowing it down from the beginning will help you focus on the most important points you want to get across.



- If there any areas that you are lacking experience/knowledge in, consider how you can change this. For example, if you do not have enough wider reading to mention, consider committing to reading more journal papers or medical novels in the time you still have!

Hopefully, from this you now have a clearer idea of how you want to structure your statement. You may not get the structure perfect from beginning, and that is fine. Keep experimenting with it and you will get there! Remember, your focus on different components will depend on your experiences, interests, and where you are applying.

Now that you have some ideas of the structure you want to use; the rest of this guide will help you in writing about your experiences in an effective way!



Mind Mapping Ideas

With the personal statement, the main concern is that there is too much to write in too little words. Therefore, it is crucial to approach the writing process with a strategy that covers all bases. The previous section focussed on developing a clear structure for your personal statement. The next step is to think critically about the content of your personal statement and begin to organise your ideas.

This will allow you to begin the writing stage with some clarity and an expectation of what the personal statement 'backbone' should look like. This is crucial to ensure your thoughts are relayed in a logical manner and will allow the content you write to be streamlined and have the effect you desire.

Planning Content

There are several ways to plan the content of your personal statement. Detailed below, are some different tried and tested methods to help you accumulate and filter through your ideas!



1. Bullet Pointing

This method will enable you to create a checklist of the experiences and extra-curricular activities you wish to include in your personal statement. This will allow you to have a general overview of all of the possible experiences you can include and will be especially useful later on in prioritising these activities.

2. Mind Maps

The mind map method is probably more useful to start delving deeper and reflecting on the experiences you have undertaken. We would recommend mind mapping each section of your personal statement, then breaking down categories (i.e. work experience, hobbies, wider reading) into the skills you learnt, insight gained and personal reflection.

3. Grid/Table Method

This method is a more in-depth approach to jotting down the 'bulks' of your personal reflection. Similar to using a mind map, this will come in very handy



when you begin to write the main body of your personal statement! Follow the simple steps below to create a detailed plan for your personal statement:

1. Input the experiences or activities you have undertaken into one column, the skills or insight gained into a second column and further reflection into the third and final column. Like this:

Activity	Skills/Insight gained	Reflection
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2. To help you prioritise the activities and experiences to include in your final personal statement, think about the following:

- How relevant are they to a career in medicine?
- Which skills have you directly and indirectly gained or developed, many of these will be 'soft skills' which you may not even realise!
- Consider, the universities you are applying to. Will your personal statement be used at interview? If so, think about whether you can sufficiently elaborate on the activities you have mentioned in an interview setting.

3. Then take your highlighter and use different colours to highlight the activities on your grid which you deem to be **'high priority'**, **'medium priority'** or **'low priority'**!



Getting Started

The Introduction

The idea of convincing an admissions tutor, in around 500 words, that you are an ideal prospective medical student can be overwhelming. This, as well as the fact that they will be reading through hundreds of personal statements of people applying for the same course, might make you feel pressured to have an introduction that will grab their attention and set you aside from the majority.



A powerful introduction will state an intrinsic motivation to study medicine, whilst also outlining your understanding of the career. However, your reasons for wanting to pursue medicine do not have to be entirely crammed into your introduction. While there is no set length for an introduction, you should make sure it is not too short that it seems rushed and neglected, but not so long that it is the same size as the paragraphs of your main body. A few sentences should be sufficient for an introduction.

It might seem logical and necessary to begin by writing the introduction, but this is not the case! It is perfectly reasonable to work on other parts of your personal statement and return to write the introduction at a later point in time. Some people even find that once they have written the majority of their personal statement, they are able to pick out points they think will work well for their introduction.

Tips for writing the introduction

- Be original! It is a personal statement so **keep it personal**. It should accurately depict why you want to study medicine.
- Stories can add to the personal element of motivation to study medicine but ensure that this comes across as genuine. Do not write try and pin your motivation down to a single event as this can appear naïve, instead state how this scenario was one of the elements which led you to pursue medicine.



- Do not spend all your time trying to think of a catchy opening. Remember that you can always come back to the introduction.
- Keep your statements succinct and to the point.
- Stay away from using humour as the person reading your personal statement may not receive it as well as you would hope. The aim is to be professional and put across your interest in medicine.

Keep in mind that depending on the interview style of the medical schools you are applying to; your personal statement can be used as part of your interview. They may pick out parts of your introduction and ask you to elaborate on them. Check this beforehand and if applicable, remember this when stating your motivations to study medicine. If you would not be happy to talk about it in your interview, then avoid including it!

Remember to avoid

- Using **cliché words and phrases** such as ‘passionate’, ‘fascinated’ and ‘from a young age I have always wanted to’.
- Using a **quote** without reflecting on how it adds to what you are trying to convey. If possible, avoid quotes and use your own words. After all, they are interested in what you have to say, not a scientist or author.
- Making **blank statements** that do not add to what you are saying.
- Describing how TV shows attracted you to medicine, even if other reasons are raised, as this will reduce the power of your introduction.

Examples

Below are two different examples of introductions for a Medicine personal statement. Read through them and then use the questions below to help you reflect on them.

- Which introduction do you prefer and why?
- Try to pick out the use of cliché words and phrases. If you want a challenge, try to rewrite these parts.
- What else would you change about both of these examples?

“I have wanted to study Medicine since I was a young child because I am very interested in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. I really enjoy studying biology and I am fascinated by the things that can go wrong in the human body so I will enjoy studying Medicine. I love helping people so I know that



being a doctor is my dream job as helping people recover from illness will be very satisfying. I am very sociable so will enjoy talking to patients as part of my degree and career.”

“The complexity of medicine scientifically, combined with the social and psychological impact of disease can significantly affect a person’s life. Effective healthcare attempts to minimise this, giving people the chance to live without being restricted by their illness. Studying Medicine will allow me to better understand disease and equip me to pursue a career in which disease and patients are the central focus. Building on my scientific knowledge with the assistance of patient interaction to supplement my learning are aspects of studying Medicine that I highly value.”



Reflection

Reflecting on your work experiences, wider reading and other relevant activities will form the bulk of the main body of your personal statement.

Reflection is imperative to a successful

application. A well-reflected personal statement shows that you have given serious thought to

healthcare as a life-long career and goes down *extremely well* with the admission officers. The General Medical Council (GMC) have created a guide for medical students about reflection, you can read it [here](#) - most of the information is transferrable to medical applicants.



It is crucial to understand that the lessons and skills that you take away from an experience are far more superior to the number of activities you have undertaken or descriptions of consultations you may have seen. Therefore, this section will delve deeper into how you should reflect on an experience whilst undertaking it, as well as how this reflection can be incorporated concisely into your personal statement.

How to reflect on an experience

Below are some general questions to think about when reflecting on any type of experience you have partaken in, ranging from clinical work experience placements to leadership roles, voluntary commitments, and part time jobs.

- **Description** of the experience: what was your role? If you are telling a story, what happened or what was the task at hand?
- **Feelings** and thoughts about the experience. What resonated with you or affected you the most?
- **Analysis and evaluation** of the experience: what went well and what didn't? Which parts stood out to you? Did you have any challenging experiences? How did you deal with them?
- **Conclusion and action plan:** summary of what you learned and what you could have done differently, and how you could relate this to your development as a doctor.



How to reflect on your learning

The following questions will help you reflect and think critically about learning experiences. This includes anything you have read, listened to, or watched to gain a deeper insight into the life of a medical student and/or doctor.

- **Description:** What is the idea or concept you have been exposed to?
- **Feelings** and thoughts about what you have learned. What resonated with you or affected you the most?
- **Analysis:** Is there anything that drew your attention, or anything you found challenging? Does this build upon what you had previously known or read about? Has it changed the way you think, opened your eyes to something new, or made you more confident and assured in a belief you already had?
- **Conclusion and action plan:** What other avenues of this concept would you like to explore? How can you implement what you've learned in your clinical practice?

The above questions were based on Gibbs reflective cycle and adapted from [here](#).

How to include reflection in your personal statement?

Before you sit down and start typing away at your statement, we highly suggest that you first read through all of the reflective notes you wrote when undertaking any experience or activity which gave you an insight into medicine. This will allow you to look back at all of the wonderful experiences you have had and focus on the key points you can take away from them.

There are so many different approaches you can take to reflective writing in your personal statement and different people prefer different methods. For example, you can structure your reflection according to Gibb's reflective cycle. Another approach is the '**STARR**' framework which stands for 'Situation, Task, Action, Result and Reflection' This is often a favourite among applicants for medicine interviews but can also be used in the personal statement to write structured reflections.





- **Situation:** What is the setting in which you have undertaken your experience?
- **Task:** What was the position or role you held?
- **Action:** What actions did you specifically carry out on a regular basis?
- **Results:** What was the most relevant and significant outcome of your activities?
- **Reflection:** What skills and knowledge have you acquired as a result of this activity? How and why had this experience influence you?

For more information about the STARR framework, please see [here](#).



Work Experience

Work experience can be loosely defined as any activity which is designed to sufficiently broaden your understanding of a particular career path. The aim of this section is to provide you with examples of the different types of work experiences you can undertake and how you should go about reflecting on them in your personal statement.

Why is work experience important?

Most students will feel that work experience gives the most realistic perspective of medicine as a career. Through shadowing in consultations, watching surgeries, and perhaps even just being in a clinical environment, you will start to build your understanding of the role of a doctor. Applying to medical school is a huge commitment, so exploring the working life of a physician is definitely a wise thing to do. Work experience allows you to gain valuable skills that may be useful throughout your university life and your career as well.

Moreover, work experience is evidence to show that you have taken time to find out more about the realities of a career in medicine. Therefore, it is a vital aspect of the not only the personal statement but your medical school application as a whole.

The purpose and overall aim of your work experience will broadly fall into one or more of the following categories:

1. To understand the realities of life as a doctor and medical student
2. To develop the skills and qualities needed for a career in medicine
3. To acquire more knowledge about your particular interests

Traditional work experience

Firstly, we will consider traditional in-person work experience activities, which are usually undertaken in a healthcare environment. This can include hospital, general practise, or pharmacy shadowing placements, as well as voluntary roles in a care home or hospice. To make the most out of these types of experiences, we would recommend the following:





- Listen to the types of questions that healthcare professionals use when taking a history or interacting with patients. What did you think about their interactions with patients? How do they adapt their communication style?
- Ask questions. This is an opportunity to ask all those burning questions, do not be shy! If possible, ask questions to a wide range of health care professionals about each of their individual roles as well as their experiences working in a multi-disciplinary team.
- Try to look up one of the common conditions that you have seen during your placement and are interested in finding out more about it.

The above points will form the basis of your reflection, so it is important to start thinking about them as you go along your work experience. Keep a **reflective diary** to jot down these thoughts and experiences. This diary will become especially useful when sitting down to write your personal statement.

Virtual work experience

As acknowledged at the beginning of this eBook, work experience in a healthcare setting can be challenging to organise, under the current circumstances. However, this does not mean that you should not seek alternative opportunities. Work experience is a vital part of your medical school application and you should at least attempt to understand the daily life working as a doctor.



Fortunately, there are a wide range of online resources that attempt to replicate the clinical environment, giving you a taste of what medicine entails. This section aims to give you some advice as to the opportunities which are currently available and how you can effectively learn from these experiences.

As mentioned previously, **'Brighton and Sussex Medical School Virtual Work Experience'** and **'Observe GP'** are excellent virtual work experience modules which are endorsed by the Medical Schools Council (MSC). Apart from this, you can use all sorts of online resources to expand your knowledge and understanding about a career in medicine. Listening to podcasts, radio programmes, or even YouTube videos can be extremely helpful as they offer a different perspective of medicine and healthcare. A good place to start may be the podcast episode; ['Junior Doctors: A matter of life and death'](#).



Reflecting on your virtual work experience will not be much different from reflecting on any other type of experience. You will need to ask yourself the same questions, and frame the answers using either 'Gibbs reflective cycle' or the 'STARR' approach, both of which we have discussed previously.

Tips for writing about work experience

- Mention the **transferrable skills and attitudes** you will have developed. Skills such as teamwork, communication, problem solving and resilience in the face of adversity are vital to a career in medicine.
- **State clearly the insights** you have gained. For example, as the GP demonstrates active listening and shows empathy, you will see that the patient immediately opens up and gives more information which will be helpful in establishing a diagnosis. If this resonates with you, include this in your personal statement.
- It is important to show that you understand the challenges a doctor will face. Be sure to reflect on any **negative experiences**, which made you more aware of the demanding nature of the profession. What could have been done differently in the scenario you witnessed?
- **Be as concise as possible**, descriptions should be kept to a minimum. It is more important to highlight your thoughts, understanding and values before and after an experience, rather than details about the experience itself.

Remember to avoid

- **Viewing work experience as merely a tick box exercise.** Try not to view work experience as the requirement for university statements or interviews. Instead, you should view this as a learning opportunity for yourself, so that you can develop both academically and personally. If you have this mindset, you will be able to truly discover a lot more about the subject and about yourself too!
- **Concerning yourself too much with the medical jargon** and knowledge you come across on your work experience, whether in-person or virtual. Focus on the attitudes and transferrable skills, and definitely do try to explore the science but ultimately medical school will teach you the required knowledge for your career.



- **Breaching confidentiality** when writing about your work experience, whether it be in your personal statement or reflective diary. This means that you do not include any identifiable information in your personal statement, such as, *'I witnessed Mr Smith undergoing an ECG'*.

Reflective examples

Below is an example of reflective writing based on a video consultation found in the 'Observe GP' virtual work experience module. This consultation features a patient who presents with a lump 'down there' to their GP.

"Before this experience, I did not realise that showing empathy can have such a great impact on patients. This consultation reinforced the concept of holistic patient-centric care for me, as I became aware of the need to involve patients in their management plan.

The GP in this video consultation, asked more questions after realising that the patient was quite reluctant to talk about his other health problems. Through this, I understood the need for excellent observational skills and ability to pick up on subtle cues as a doctor. The attentiveness shown in his clinical practice helped to greatly improve delivery of care, as he was able to refer to the patient to other services, to encourage lifestyle modifications. I aim to incorporate these ideas, such as showing empathy and good observation skills, into my future practice as a medical student and a doctor."



Volunteering

Volunteering is the idea of offering your time or skills to benefit an unrelated person or organisation with no formal payment in return.

Why are voluntary roles important?

Relevant volunteering can be considered a form of **work experience** and can greatly enhance your personal statement. Whilst grades are important, medical schools are also highly interested in students who exhibit genuine care and compassion. Doing voluntary work can highlight this side of you and give some insight into the life of a doctor, which is very much a caring profession. Volunteering can assist you in developing the necessary skills and qualities relevant to medicine.

The types of volunteering roles and commitments you can include in your personal statement, can vary extensively. Moreover, the volunteering you have undertaken does not need to be within a healthcare setting. It is more important that you can reflect on your experiences and appreciate how the skills you have developed are relevant to career in medicine.

Below are just *some* examples of voluntary roles you may include in your personal statement:

- Carehome/hospice volunteer
- Hospital volunteer
- School mentor
- Charity shop assistant
- Youth group coordinator
- Foodbank volunteer



Due to current restrictions in place as a result of COVID-19, you may find that in-person volunteering activities are harder to access. We would encourage you to seek alternative opportunities to support your local community, for example volunteering to support vulnerable neighbours on a regular basis. Try to organise **digital volunteering** opportunities, we would recommend that you phone or email your local care home, asking if they would be willing to accept you as a virtual volunteer. You can offer to phone, video call or send letters to



the residents. Arranging something like this, shows that you have been taking initiative and thinking outside of the box!

Tips for writing about voluntary roles

- Emphasise any **long-term or frequent volunteering** commitments. This shows commitment to medicine and determination. Whilst long term volunteering is favoured, do not worry if you were unable to complete any due to the pandemic!
- **Use buzzwords** alluding to the relevant skills and qualities learnt.
- Discuss briefly how you found any volunteering opportunities, especially if you organised it yourself. This shows initiative! If an opportunity is extremely rare or competitive, make sure to highlight this.
- **Group together experiences** where you gained similar skills and insights, rather than discussing multiple experiences individually. This can get messy and take up a lot of your time
- Speak about your **feelings and emotions** during your volunteering! This shows you are human and comes across much more genuine and sincere.
- Clearly **state your contribution and actions**, not someone else's!
- Discuss any sacrifices, mistakes, or **challenges** you faced during your volunteering. Also make sure you are prepared to describe what you did/would do differently to overcome these challenges!

Remember to avoid

- Rambling on about experiences, use the *STARR structure* to organise thoughts. Keep it concise!
- Writing a long list of all the voluntary roles you have ever held. Focus on one or two that you benefitted from greatly and reflect on them.
- **Repeating** experiences, certain insights, or qualities. Demonstrate variety in what you have learned.
- **Lie or exaggerate** any details!





- Superficially state what happened. If you are able to, delve further into your thoughts before, during and after volunteering.

Reflective examples

Read the following examples, highlight any buzzwords, and think critically about how these applicants have reflected on their voluntary commitments. Compare both examples, what are the strengths and weaknesses of both?

“The GMC have stated key qualities that all doctors must have; a few are teamwork, being supportive and effective communication. Through my caring experiences I believe I can develop into such doctor and I feel driven to do this. I work as a medical assessor once a month aiding people in the night- time economy with a charity called ‘Vennture’. It is my responsibility to help care for people on the streets of Hereford. An individual’s health when inebriated is volatile so it is often a highly stressful job and has taught me how to deal with the pressure whilst keeping a calm thinking ability. One challenging experience was having to console an intoxicated man who had just been faced with a bereavement. I felt emotional whilst listening, but I knew I had to control myself and handle the situation with compassion. One thing I learnt from this was how much a difference it makes to simply listen.”

Notice how this applicant focuses on one interaction as part of the job and reflects on it deeply, describing challenges faced and lessons learned, whilst also relating it back to the qualities described by the GMC for doctors. This applicant speaks about their feelings and emotions, which makes a personal statement all the more personal!

“Through volunteering at my local care home on a weekly basis and interacting with vulnerable residents such as those with dementia, I have gained insight as to the stark realities of treating such conditions. However, conversing with such residents taught me the value of a few comforting words. Overtime, I became more confident in initiating conversation with the residents and building rapport; both of which are essential for nurturing trust within a doctor-patient relationship. This experience taught me the importance of non-verbal communication skills, the need to be attentive, reassuring and calm when dealing with acutely distressed patients.”



This applicant has emphasised the long-term nature of their voluntary role in order to demonstrate commitment. They have conveyed the development of important qualities such as empathy, compassion, and communication. Moreover, the applicant acknowledges the challenges which one may face as a healthcare professional, showing that they have sought to gain a real insight into the field of medicine.



Wider Reading

In this section, we will discuss why wider reading is necessary to enhance your application to study medicine, how you can seek out opportunities for extra-curricular learning and finally how you can elaborate on these activities in your personal statement.

Why is wider reading important?

Wider reading activities relevant to medicine, can be anything from reading articles on the topics which have sparked your interest during your A-level studies, to reading blog posts and books to gain a broader understanding of medicine as a career. Including activities like this in your personal statement will help you demonstrate a keen interest in the medical sciences, the ability to undertake independent learning and overall commitment to acquiring more knowledge about life as a clinician. There are many examples of activities which will supplement your current studies and further your exploration into medicine. We have listed just *some* examples below:

- **Books** – Reading should not be chore, so select books to read which genuinely interest you! For a detailed list of recommendations see [here](#).
- **Journal and news articles** – This will also help you to keep up to date with hot topics in the news, which is especially important for medical interviews. We would recommend taking a look at the '*New Scientist*' or '*Student BMJ*' for articles which take your fancy!
- **Online courses** – This is an excellent way to build your knowledge base in almost any field. '*Future Learn*' have a wealth of free courses often produced by university experts themselves.



Tips for writing about wider reading activities

- **Be specific!** Say exactly what interests you about a certain topic, as this will convey a sense of genuine interest.
- Extra-curricular learning is not limited to just the scientific aspect of medicine. For example, if you possess an avid interest for medical ethics



and enjoy reading the literature within this field, you could include your reflections on a prominent case study in your personal statement.

- **Be unique!** Where possible, try to be original when it comes to reflecting on the books and articles you have read in your personal statement. State your personal opinions and insights gained, without being generic.
- Wider reading in itself is evidence of **self-directed learning!** However, to go one step further, state exactly how you undertook independent research to understand more about a topic. For example, after hearing about a particular condition in a webinar, go away and find an interesting article which relates to what you learnt.
- **Make links** between what you have observed or seen during work experience and your wider reading activities. For example, if you observed a doctor-patient consultation regarding the complications of diabetes, maybe you went away and did further reading on this. Not only does this show that you are a highly self-motivated individual, but this also shows a passion for learning more about disease processes.



Remember to avoid

- Including any wider reading or examples of extra-curricular learning which you have not actually undertaken! This also includes books you have not gotten round to finishing yet. It will be very hard to come up with unique insights or examples of effective reflection and you might be caught out in your interview.
- Mentioning books in your personal statement if you are not entirely comfortable with the idea that you may be asked about them in further detail in your interview. If this is the case, it is best to stick with articles, case studies or online courses, which are likely to be shorter than most medical novels!
- Reflecting on the most common and talked about medical novels. Whilst they may be fantastic reads, they are likely to be mentioned in the personal statement by many aspiring medical applicants. Try to choose books which are not so well known and can provide you with unique insights.



- Listing several books, articles, or lectures with limited reflection. It is much better to write about one article as opposed to name dropping three books! Remember quality over quantity.
- Bombarding your personal statement with too many examples of wider reading. Remember you are applying to four different medical schools, all of which place a varying degree of emphasise on demonstrating an interest in academia and medical science.

Reflective examples

Below are two examples of how to incorporate reflection of extra-curricular learning in your personal statement. It is important to note, that this applicant applied to the University of Oxford and as a result placed a large emphasis on their foray into the medical sciences.



“I have always sought to supplement my A-level studies with wider reading. One notable example was my reading an article in the New Scientist titled ‘How waste pulses through your brain’, which had captured my interest as to the causes of neurodegenerative diseases and, specifically, the raging debate regarding the significance of Tau proteins in the aetiology of Alzheimer’s. Keen to broaden my knowledge I signed up to a programme of online courses; ‘Good brain, bad brain’ with the University of Birmingham. I came to realise that the threads of enquiry are numerous, and the challenges vast. Data from neurophysiology, GWAS studies, and animal models – themselves of questionable–validity, all play a part in ultimately treating neurodegenerative diseases.”

The applicant mentions specific topics of interest to them, ensuring that their reflection is unique and personal. They clearly show how they have undertaken independent learning to acquire further knowledge and understanding.

“Attending the Oxford UNIQ Summer School for Oncology I engaged with tutors on epigenetics and the use of techniques such as PCR in detecting and treating cancer. I was moved to discover, above and beyond the fascinating intellectual questions about cancer treatment, the very real and very human impact that advances in our understanding of cancer pathophysiology can make. Delving



deeper into the field of genetics and using gel electrophoresis in the laboratory, compounded my appreciation of the evolving face of science."

Here the applicant discusses their experiences during a summer school. Notice how their reflection, really portrays their feelings and emotions.



Extra-Curricular Activities

When it comes to extra-curriculars, it's easy to get confused on what you should include and how to include it in your personal statement. As an aspiring medic, you might have done many different activities at school (and outside) that may be related, or seemingly have nothing to do with each other. This could range from part-time jobs, to being a prefect in your school, societies, clubs or even your personal hobbies or sporting interests.

In your personal statement, a great way to tie it all together is to use your activities to reflect on how they made you the person you are today. Instead of simply listing all of your positions or engagements, think about what qualities you were able to gain from them that would make you a better doctor. Among

others, qualities like **compassion, empathy, time management, organisation, critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership** are essential in medicine, but they're not necessarily born in a hospital or through direct engagement in clinical experiences. You have probably been doing some of these activities for a really long time, now let's frame it in a different context for your application.



Quality over quantity

In a large pool of applicants, it is easy to think 'have I done enough?'

Sometimes, this can be the wrong question to ask, as most medical schools do not look at the 'number' of things you have done, but rather how the things you've done can help you as a doctor. Do not worry if you have not done a lot of activities in your time at school. The number of things you've done doesn't matter as much as what you've learned from them, how you've reflected on them and extracted moments and experiences you can work on, and how you've later developed as a person and an aspiring medic based on those experiences.



What goes where?

With a limited number of characters, every word counts. You want to make sure you make the most of everything you have done, but at the same time frame it in the most effective way for your application. This is why you might want to focus on some activities over others, or group some activities together to give yourself space to write about and reflect on your experiences in a more elaborate way, and relate them to your future career. There are many ways you can group your activities, mainly either by the **type** of activity (academic, sports, or volunteering for example), or based on what **qualities or skills** you've developed as a result of partaking in this activity.

Should I include my hobbies?

The short answer is yes, if you want to, but - *make sure you're not just taking up space by listing them.* You don't need to elaborate on them too much if you don't want to, but try to strike the balance so as to show the admissions committee you value your time spent doing these hobbies, but at the same time you're not taking away from all the other elements of your personal statement. You could also relate them to having **work-life balance** - an essential trait in medicine.



Tips for writing about extra-curricular activities

- Use your experiences to **highlight your strengths and your skills**. How did your activity help you develop a unique skill?
- Focus on the activities that have benefited you the most.
- Elaborate with insight and introspection on the activities you've chosen to focus on.
- Group other activities together to help you use your limited characters where they matter most.

Remember to avoid

- Listing things, you have done without further elaborating on them.
- Elaborating on every single activity, or being repetitive - if they sound similar, group them, or take some out if you don't think they're important.



- Faking interest or passion in something you do not actually like or mention an activity you did not really do. It takes away from the space you have to talk about things you are passionate about, which is a lot more valuable and impactful.

Reflective examples

Below are two examples from two different applicants. Compare the ways by which they have reflected on their extra-curricular activities, which do you think is more effective and why?

“Medicine is a very active field and doctors must be up to date and be devoted to a lifetime of learning. In my high school I won the Triple Science Award and am currently starting my EPQ on NHS budgeting. This project is really benefitting my research and analytical skills and requires me to focus on time management. As of November, I will be involved in a maths mentoring scheme. I am looking forward to supporting pupils in their education and improving my leadership and teaching skills. I will develop my skills of interaction at the opposite end of the age range from my nursing home experience. My hobbies are running, exercising and skiing. I enjoy playing the piano and doing yoga as a means of relaxation. I had been a member of my local drama group for three years and have been a part of several stage performances.”



Here, the applicant elaborates on some projects they have embarked on, but when it comes to hobbies, they simply list them - which is understandable given the limited character count. Where possible, it is usually favourable to elaborate and reflect further on how your hobbies help you develop as a person. See the example below for a more elaborate reflection including hobbies.

“To maintain a healthy work-life balance I participate in the debate club at school, finding that debating alleviates stress as well as developing my reasoning skills. At home, cycling in the local forest helps to clear my mind. Through my roles as a prefect for Year 7 and as a Young Leader for three years at Brownies, I have developed my leadership and communication styles by adapting them to different audiences. My involvement in Young Enterprise and organising prom



has demonstrated the difficulties of decision-making within a team and how sometimes compromise is crucial. This August, I was thrilled to represent the UK in Japan at the World Scout Jamboree alongside 34,000 young people. Preparing for this by fundraising £3250 and attending training weekends has taught me exceptional time-management and organisation skills."

Notice how here, the applicant describes their hobbies in the context of 'maintaining a healthy work life balance' – while also reflecting on how each of them has helped them develop certain skills. Here, you could potentially add how these skills would be useful in medical school or a clinical context to enhance the application.



The Conclusion

This is your final chance to make an impression on the admissions tutor, so make it count! The aim of your conclusion should be to tie together the key points that you included in the main body of your personal statement. Along with the introduction, this is one of the most difficult parts to write, so writing both at the end, after you have a coherent idea of the ebb and flow of your piece is advisable.

Ideally, it should only be a few sentences long. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to revisit your conclusion multiple times before submitting. It is important to end on a confident note by expressing a real passion for medicine.

Tips for writing the conclusion

- **Summarise and reiterate your key points** – skills, experiences, and interests and how these make you suitable for studying medicine. For example, if your experiences have taught you the importance of resilience, how will this skill help you to progress in your future career?
- **Mention the takeaway points** that you want the admission tutor to remember about you.
- **Revisit your conclusion** and read it aloud to yourself. Reading it out to yourself and others helps to determine if you're being concise and getting straight to the point without waffling.
- **Write a couple of drafts of different conclusions** and choose the one you like the most or combine ideas.
- **Acknowledge the difficulties** and demanding nature of studying medicine and show how the skills you've developed will assist you in overcoming difficulties.



Remember to avoid

- **Writing a conclusion which is too long.** You will probably find that the 4000-character limit of the personal statement will restrict the length of your conclusion. So ideally, one or two succinct sentences should be more than enough to summarise.



- **Introducing completely new points** – you do not want to leave the admissions tutor confused by bringing in new ideas that you cannot elaborate on further.
- As with the introduction, **avoid clichés and quotes.**
- **Avoid repeating sentences** from your main body of the personal statement.
- Avoid making your conclusion **too specific to one university.** For example, don't mention a particular teaching style if it is not offered by all the universities that you are applying for.

Examples

Below are a few examples of conclusions for a Medicine personal statement. Read through them and then use the questions below to help you reflect on them. However, it is important to bear in mind, that it is often quite difficult to judge the quality of a stand-alone conclusion. It is better to read conclusions in the context of the whole personal statement. You will have an opportunity to do this, later on in this guide.

“I believe that my motivation to take on the social and academic challenges of university is instrumental for my progression and success in my chosen career field.”

“My ability to study independently and to efficiently manage time will allow me to succeed in this fulfilling career whilst ensuring a good work-life balance.”

“My commitment and desire for a career in medicine has been strengthened through various opportunities presented to me through the form of work experience.”

“I look forward to the opportunity to contribute to society through implementing change, to contribute to the medical professional itself through research and most importantly the opportunity for life-long learning”

The above concluding statements all have a different focus. Some reiterate the development of key skills; others reinforce the applicant's personal motivation to study medicine. There is no right or wrong answer.

- Which conclusion do you prefer the most and why?
- Analyse each of the concluding statements and comment on what you would change about the above examples.



Editing and Proofreading

Now that you have written your personal statement, the hard part is over, right? Well, in all honesty you might find yourself spending more time editing your personal statement than writing it! It is important to give yourself enough time to perfect your personal statement before the deadline.



Our advice at this point is – before you start editing, put your personal statement away. By the time you have finished writing, you will have read and re-read it countless times in the process. You need to take the time away from it to get a fresh look. This will be invaluable when you start editing.

Spelling, punctuation, and grammar

First things first, triple-check that your **word processor has spell-check** on with UK English, so that you can correct any spelling mistakes. It may sound obvious; however, technology can often malfunction!

You are a school-age pupil, so the piece should sound like you wrote it. It does not have to sound like you have taken letter-writing classes and have used a thesaurus on every other word. However, you also need to come across **professional**. It is best not to use contractions such as don't (do not), as it is too informal. Make sure you have used a combination of long and short sentences so that it has structure, as well as making sure every sentence doesn't start with 'I'.

There are many ways of making sure your personal statement reads well. One method, which is particularly helpful is to **read your personal statement aloud** to someone else. It becomes very obvious when a sentence is too long, does not flow or make sense when you say it aloud. The person listening will be able to tell you which parts do not sound right. When we write, we often overestimate how well the writing sounds, because *you* will of course know what you *meant* to say. However, to another person and the admissions team reading it – you want them to know exactly what you mean, rather than having to decode paragraphs that are not crystal clear.



You could try asking an **English teacher** at your school, or a friend who is studying English to read through it. The spelling, grammar and syntax is independent of the content, and so this could be really useful in ensuring it flows well.

Content

A great way to make sure your personal statement is clear and relevant, is to essentially make **a reverse-plan**. This involves using your personal statement to create a summary of your main ideas.

Step 1: Grab a **coloured pen**. Mark and number every individual point you have written. Make a list of these. This should not be as long as you think, perhaps 5–8 main points.

Step 2: Look at your list of points. Do any of the points repeat or overlap? If you are struggling to cut down those characters, cut out or combine closely related points.

Step 3: Now identify the themes of your points – is there a good balance? If not, which important qualities or skills have you included too much of and which have you failed to include?

Step 4: Go back to the text and look at the marked points. Does every point you have made have an example as evidence AND have you reflected on them? There is no benefit in trying to cram in as much as possible; it is far better to have **fewer well-reflected ideas** than to list all the books you have read and things you saw on work experience.

Seeking another opinion

Whilst it may seem tempting to gain as many opinions as possible on your personal statement, it is better to seek the advice of a few trusted individuals. The personal statement is by nature a subjective piece of writing. Having too many people read your personal statement and suggest changes, can become quite confusing and stressful very quickly! Listed below are some tips to help avoid this situation.



- Make sure you are **close to your final draft** before giving your personal statement to someone else to read. However, still ensure you have enough time to make changes.
- If your school has a **careers advisor** or **team of teachers** familiar with reading personal statements, it is worth having your personal statement read and critiqued by them.
- When listening to feedback from others, consider all you can get, but don't be afraid to not include all the feedback you receive since your personal statement should be truly reflective of only you.
- If you would really like a **raw opinion**, find a way to have a teacher read it **anonymously!** The admissions tutor will be reading your personal statement with no knowledge of who you are. If you want someone to read your personal statement with no knowledge of your background, print off a copy with your details omitted.

Tips to shorten your personal statement

- Do not waste characters writing about things that are elsewhere on your UCAS form. For example, your A-level (or equivalent) choices can all be entered in the qualifications section.
- **Remove unnecessary adverbs** such as *somewhat, rather, sometimes, fairly, pretty really, quite, basically, hopefully, luckily*.
- Use the verb form of a word over the noun form – this should reduce words. For example, *'I created a MedSoc'* vs *'A MedSoc was created by me'*
- **Print off your personal statement** to edit and cut words. Print it off in a different font to the one you typed it in. This will provide an experience of looking at your personal statement with 'fresh eyes'.
- Use the ['Build, Blur, Corrode'](#) method to identify the weakest parts of your personal statement.
- If you cannot bear to cut sentences, copy and paste them into a document called 'Scrap', that way you know exactly where to find them if you were to want to add them again.
- When focusing on a specific paragraph, copy it into a new black document and separate each sentence with a line between them. Use this technique to perfect each individual sentence and identify those that are too long.





- When retelling encounters from your work experience, detail of what exactly happened is not always necessary! The example below demonstrates just how many characters you can save by cutting out unnecessary detail.

The example below is exactly **499** characters.

"I shadowed a junior doctor during my work experience on a medical ward at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I saw how she spoke to a patient's family when their father had suffered from a heart attack and passed away, and the compassion and empathy shown really put the family at comfort and ease. I could see how even though treatment can sometimes be futile, there is no such thing as helplessness because you can always make a difference to the lasting impression on the family, who were so grateful."

After cutting out the unnecessary details, the example is now **353** characters!

When shadowing a doctor at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, I watched her break the bad news to a family of their father's death. While the actions of the team could not save his life, they were so grateful that they had been given the time to have all their concerns addressed. I witnessed such compassion and empathy that has stayed with me since.



Common mistakes to avoid

1. Cliché or unoriginal opening Line

The first line of your personal statement can be the most important! This is what will grab the attention of those assessing you, who may be reading dozens of personal statements at a time! Try to not start with a cliché like: “I have wanted to be a doctor for as long as I can remember” as hundreds of personal statements will start that exact same way! Try to start with something original to YOU!



2. Plagiarising content

There are many amazing example personal statements published online you could use. You could also easily ask a friend or sibling who may have gotten an offer to medicine for their personal statement and just copy it a little bit. DO NOT fall into this trap! UCAS has a robust way of detecting plagiarism. Moreover, as this is extremely untrustworthy and goes against everything that medicine and being a doctor should stand for, it will likely put a huge red flag on your application.

3. Fabricating or exaggerating

The purpose of your personal statement is to share your experiences so medical schools can learn about YOU. It is not to make up amazing stories, like how you saved the life of a woman with postpartum haemorrhage in the vast wilderness of sub-Saharan Africa. If you HAVE done that, amazing! But for the majority, tell the truth and talk about what you have actually done. It will sound so much more authentic, and it is more important to discuss what you've gained from your work experience not the fancy work experience itself!

4. Listing your fancy accomplishments with no reflection or insights

This may seem like a great idea, but you will find it actually will not help your application. Medical schools want to see that you are able to reflect on your experiences, show insight, and discuss how you have gained the attributes and skills necessary to be a successful doctor. They do not want you to list a bunch of cool stuff you have done without discussing what you've gained from it, we cannot stress this enough!



5. Failing to PROVE all your assertions

DO NOT make an assertion without evidence! Instead of just saying in your personal statement, “I am passionate” or “I am hardworking”, tell stories or show examples of situations where you have proven you are passionate or hardworking. This is a perfect time to discuss sporting interests, any jobs you may have had, your work experience, any medical books you have read, or how you have been diligently participating in journal clubs and other ‘*We Are Medics*’ activities.

6. Not stating clearly why YOU want to study medicine

Make sure you do not overcomplicate things with flowery prose, funky quotes, or long descriptions of work experience! You need to actually answer the question about why you want to study medicine and why you want to become a doctor! Make sure you answer that directly and clearly, some personal statements work too hard on being creative that the answer gets lost.

7. Failing to proofread before submission

This is an easily avoidable mistake, so do not make it! You should make sure there are no grammar or spelling errors in your personal statement. You have only 4000 characters, so make them count and make them correct! This is a perfect opportunity to ask your English teacher or bookworm friend to have a read over for you specifically looking for punctuation/grammar/spelling problems.

8. Leaving your personal statement to the last minute

If you are reading this eBook as soon as it comes out, then this doesn’t apply to you! But you need to make sure you are starting your personal statement on time. One of the benefits of starting earlier, is that you can identify areas which you are lacking in earlier on. For example, if you realise early on that you need to engage in more wider reading activities, you will have more time to read articles or books which interest you before writing the bulk of your personal statement. Also, rushing your personal statement is how you can end up with grammar errors, spelling mistakes, and disjointed sentences. You also want to have a fresh set of eyes (sibling/friend/teacher/parent) to read a draft for you as well so you need to allow time for this,



Checklist of Buzzwords

Active vs Passive Verbs

When writing any application or personal statement, it is vital to ensure your written communication is clear, concise, and engaging to read. One of the best ways to achieve this is to write in the **active voice**, as opposed to the passive voice.



For example, *'I founded a medical society in my sixth form'* as opposed to *'The medical society in my sixth form was run by me'*.

Or *'I launched a bake sale to raise money for our local hospice'* as opposed to *'In Year 12 there was a bake sale to raise money for a local hospice, it was organised by me'*.

In the two examples above, the first sentence of each is written in the active voice. This places the focus on the individual's action and allows the writer to use more exciting verbs and buzzwords. The second sentence is written in the passive voice. The focus is on the event or activity, but not on how the individual's action influenced it. Writing in the passive voice usually requires more words and is less engaging to read. A good way to ensure you are writing in the active voice is to start sentences with "I-" followed by a positive action verb. For instance: "I developed" or "I created".

Now that we have discussed the importance of using the active voice, we have shared below an ultimate list of exciting and engaging verbs. Use these in your personal statement to describe your activities, extra-curriculars and personal interests.

Accelerated	Accomplished	Accounted for	Accumulated
Achieved	Adapted	Addressed	Adjusted
Advanced	Advocated	Amplified	Analysed
Answered	Anticipated	Applied	Appointed



Arranged	Articulated	Attracted	Balanced
Boosted	Broadened	Budgeted	Built
Calculated	Campaigned	Captured	Caused
Chaired	Championed	Changed	Coached
Co-directed	Collaborated	Collected	Co-managed
Combined	Communicated	Completed	Considered
Consolidated	Contributed	Coordinated	Created
Cultivated	Customised	Decided	Defined
Delivered	Demonstrated	Developed	Discovered
Displayed	Drafted	Educated	Eliminated
Emphasized	Empowered	Encouraged	Established
Exceeded	Expanded	Fine-tuned	Formed
Founded	Generated	Halved	Harnessed
Identified	Influenced	Launched	Led
Managed	Mentored	Navigated	Negotiated
Oversaw	Performed	Persuaded	Prioritised
Qualified	Reached	Realigned	Reported
Represented	Secured	Set up	Simplified
Solved	Started	Supported	Taught
Trained	Tutored	Understood	Utilised
Updated	Valued	Volunteered	Won

These were collated from a longer list available [here](#).



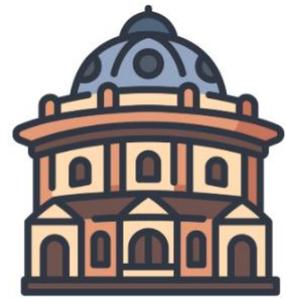
Additional Advice

In the following section, we aim to provide those of you who are writing your personal statements as *graduate, gap year or international applicants* with specific advice and resources. We have also included some further guidance if you have your sights set on applying to Oxbridge!

We believe that all of the advice and resources discussed previously, are still super relevant and applicable to you as the basis of any good personal statement is largely the same. However, we hope that if needed, you will find the following guidance helpful in refining your personal statement even further.

Oxbridge Applicants

Like all medicine admissions tutors, admission tutors at both Oxford and Cambridge University are looking for people who are motivated to do medicine, have good personal qualities, and have a realistic idea of what a career in medicine entails. It is important to understand that the course at both of these institutions involves compulsory intercalation and both courses place a great emphasis on developing academic skills. Hence, admissions tutors are also looking for evidence of **'intellectual curiosity'** and **'engagement'**.



This means you need to include your interest for the scientific aspect of medicine, they want to see that you ask questions about what you are learning and have begun to show signs of **independent and self-directed learning**.

It is also very likely that you will be asked about something you have mentioned in your personal statement in the Oxbridge interview, so ensure that you are happy to talk in sufficient depth about all the experiences, articles and/or books you have mentioned in your personal statement. Before writing your personal statement read through the Oxford or Cambridge selection criteria depending on which university you are hoping to apply to.

Top Tips



1. Demonstrate your scientific curiosity with evidence of independent learning

When alluding to a particular field of medicine or scientific topic which interests you, state *why this fascinates you* and *how you researched further* into the topic. For example, you may have come across a topic in your work experience/lecture/webinar which lead you delve further into the field by reading an article, on the said topic. Where possible try including your personal reflections and opinions of an article or book.

2. If possible, include examples of how you have developed strong 'academic skills'

By 'academic skills' we mean critical thinking, analytical and academic writing abilities. You may have attended regular journal and book clubs, such as those hosted virtually by 'We Are Medics' which have familiarised you with evidence-based medicine and critical appraisal. Or you may have written blog posts, essays or undertaken an extended project qualification (EPQ) at school. These are all excellent examples to mention and reflect upon in your personal statement.

3. Include topics which genuinely interest you and awaken your curiosity

This is because you may be asked to talk about what you have mentioned at the interview and the more you know about the topic, the better. Be honest, do not be tempted to exaggerate or make things up because it will be clear if you are called for an interview.

Remember to avoid

- Making your personal statement **too focused on science and academia**. You need to remember that your personal statement will be sent to *four medical schools*, so ensure that it meets the admissions criteria of the other medical schools as well as Oxbridge.
- Do not just state that you are curious about science or have a good understanding of scientific principles, use evidence to show that you have these qualities.
- **Using too much jargon or words** that you do not really understand the meaning of.



- As with all aspects of the personal statement **avoid just listing things**, whether its books you have read or your qualities.
- List books/ articles that you haven't actually read or mention lectures or webinars that you haven't actually attended.

Useful Resources

The following resources have been produced by the universities themselves. We strongly recommend that you familiarise yourself with these, as they will help you in tailoring your personal statement for Oxbridge.

- [Selection Criteria, University of Oxford](#)
- [Key Criteria for Medical Admissions, University of Cambridge](#)
- [Writing your Personal Statement, University of Oxford](#)
- [Anatomy of a Personal Statement, University of Oxford](#)





Graduate Applicants

Thousands of graduate students apply to study Graduate Entry Medicine (GEM) every year. So, if you are a graduate student looking to apply via this route, your personal statement should aim to incorporate your unique experiences, which will help you stand out from the crowd! Whilst the advice we have compiled in this eBook is all highly applicable and relevant to you, the following section will elaborate on how you can go about reflecting on your undergraduate studies and any long-term employment experiences in your personal statement.

Undergraduate degree

Discussing the experience and the skills you have learnt from **roles of responsibility** you held in your undergraduate degree is a valuable part of the personal statement. This allows you to showcase the skills you have developed from your role, which will in turn help you when studying medicine and as a future doctor. Before beginning to write your personal statement, have a think about the following questions:



- What positions of responsibility have you held during your undergraduate degree?
- Which skills or qualities had you developed from these experiences? Reflect on how these skills will help you when you undertake a career in medicine.

Now formulate these thoughts, into short and concise reflections for your personal statement. To help you with this, read the examples below.

“During my pharmacy degree, I was the Aston University Student Champion for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. Through this role, I learnt leadership, organisational and interpersonal skills, which have helped both my personal and academic development.”

“...being the elected student representative to the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists. I believe this demonstrates my ability to be a well-rounded candidate, capable of working individually or as a team, succeeding and



promoting progression not only for myself, but for my peers, in a variety of settings.”

During your undergraduate degree you may have completed a **final year project or dissertation**. These projects will have introduced you to *research skills* which are valuable in medicine. In addition, it is very common for medical students to complete a dissertation or research project during their degree. Equally, clinical audits and quality improvement projects are a vital part of healthcare and you may conduct them as a medical student or as a doctor. Drawing on these experiences are evidence of skills important to medicine. It is important to have a think about the following:

- What **research project or dissertation** (science or non-science) have you completed in your undergraduate degree? Do you have any publications?
- Have you completed a **service evaluation/audit/quality improvement** project?
- Have you undertaken an MSc or PhD?
- What skills have you learnt from these? How will the skills help you as a future medical student or doctor?

To help you reconstruct these thoughts and ideas into concise reflections, have a read of the example below.

“I was awarded a competitive 8-week studentship by the Lister Institute where I worked on patient fibroblasts with mutant DNA repair protein Treslin; where my work will contribute towards a publication. I prioritised and organised myself to carry out experiments, became resilient when faced with problems and became able to effectively analyse data to draw conclusions. I can translate these skills to treating patients as I witnessed doctors using them to provide good care. Evidence based medicine is important for improving patient care, and I have the skills to help me continue researching as a medical student and an academic doctor, as well as giving me an awareness of how research changes practise.”

Full or part-time employment

You may have been in full or part-time employment. Discussing this in your personal statement allows you to talk about the responsibilities you have had and use this as evidence of skills you have already demonstrated. Different from



observational work experience, **active roles** show you can exhibit these skills again moving forward. You do need to have previously worked in a healthcare related field, **transferable skills** also apply and should be emphasised in your personal statement. The example below illustrates exactly how to reflect deeply on the skills and knowledge acquired through long-term employment as a healthcare professional.



'Pharmacy has helped me to develop a broad range of skills necessary to study medicine. At Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust (HEFT), I liaise within an MDT to provide patient-centred care and deliver an efficient and seamless service, especially when undertaking ward-based medicine management. I take accurate drug histories from patients through the use of pertinent questions and observation skills. Using my professional judgement in the interest of patient safety allows me to readily detect and reduce the occurrence of medication errors.'

Top Tips

- **Use your previous degree as a strength** – it has given you another perspective and it may have allowed you to understand other disciplines that you may be working around in medicine. Draw on skills you have developed and highlight how they will help you work more effectively as a future doctor.
- **Draw on the knowledge gained**, this will form as a strong foundation going into graduate entry medicine (GEM) i.e. physiology, anatomy, pharmacology, etc.
- Draw on **academic skills** gained through projects, dissertations, or published work e.g. literature search, statistical analysis, critical appraisal) which comes with a previous degree.
- Include **extra-curricular activities** and commitments outside of academia to demonstrate an ability to display a good work-life balance. GEM is demanding so evidence of an ability to prioritise time and switch off is a positive sign of being able to cope with this kind of course!



- **Be specific** about how long you did your work experience/voluntary work/employment for.

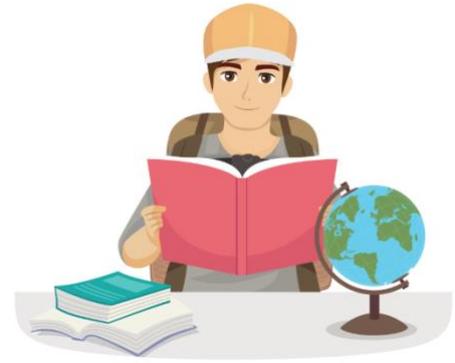
Remember to avoid

- **Dismissing your previous degree**, especially if you have a healthcare degree for example physician associate, pharmacy, or nursing. This could come across as a failure to recognise the value of different roles and responsibilities within the healthcare team. Remember, having this exposure is a strength!
- **Overloading your personal statement**. As a graduate, you may have a number of experiences and achievements you would like to include. This is great but to really draw on your learning from these experiences as well as the skills you have gained, pick the most relevant.



Gap Year Applicants

You may be applying to study medicine with the intention of taking a gap year before starting medical school (**deferred entry**) or you may be taking an unexpected gap year and re-applying to study medicine. Whatever your reason for taking a gap year, the principle of showcasing your determination and suitability for a career in medicine through your personal statement remains the same. To help you prepare your personal statement, have a real think about your plans for gaining further experience before you embark on your gap year adventure.



Start to plan your gap year from the get-go! This is especially the case if you are applying via deferred entry. Take your time to source opportunities which will help you demonstrate commitment as well as develop key skills required of a doctor such as teamwork, communication, and time management skills. This can be achieved through long term voluntary roles or paid employment. Try to ensure these positions are public facing and if possible, within a healthcare setting. You may find that certain experiences and jobs may be easier to access once you turn 18.

If you are re-applying to medicine, try to get **feedback** regarding your prior application(s) from the medical schools you applied to. This will be invaluable when it comes planning your gap year and writing your personal statement again. It is important to identify the weaknesses of your previous application(s), how do you aim to make an improvement on those areas? It may be that your personal statement was not totally reflective of the requirements of all four of the medical schools you previously applied to. Therefore, as previously mentioned you need to thoroughly research not only how the university will be using your personal statement in their selection process but also what they are looking for, in terms of the contents.

Mentioning your gap year in the personal statement

This is much easier if you are making an application to study medicine after having undertaken a gap year. You will simply need to write a personal statement which reflects upon all the great experiences you have had over the



past year and explain how they have made you more committed to studying medicine. However, if you are applying in advance of your gap year some of your experiences maybe ongoing throughout the year, whilst you may not have even started others at the time of submitting your application. This may present a few challenges when writing your personal statement.

However, it is important to note, that all medical schools will require some form of evidence that you have already begun to gain a deeper insight into the medical profession whether it be through extra-curricular learning or practical experience. You cannot simply state future plans for gaining experience and insights, you must say how you have already done this. If your experiences are likely to be long term and ongoing, then state this clearly in your personal statement as this will demonstrate dedication and commitment.

If you have specific queries about undertaking a gap year and reflecting on those experiences in your personal statement, we strongly advise that you email the admissions team of the medical schools you intend to apply to.



International Applicants

For an international student, the principles and basics of a personal statement will not differ too much from a home student. As with everything else, demonstrating deep reflection on your unique experiences, and how they made you who you are today, will be a strong point in your application no matter where you are from. However, the nature of your experiences may have been influenced by where you're from, and it's important to reflect on that in the context of how and where you see yourself in the future. Let's break this down.

When discussing your work experience, your extra-curriculars, or your hobbies, it would be really useful for you to elaborate on the insight that gave you, and how you came to realise that studying medicine abroad is something you want to pursue. Additionally, it is highly encouraged for you to reflect on why **specifically the UK healthcare system** would be a good place for you to learn; you might also find it useful to reflect on parallels between the UK system and the healthcare system in your home country.

Listed below are a few reflective prompts to help you reflect on your experiences and draw comparisons between differing healthcare systems.

- In what ways are both healthcare systems similar?
- In what ways are they different?
- How have you developed and what have you learned, having seen and learned about both of them?
- What are your goals for the future?
- In what ways will learning in the UK in general, and specifically medicine, help you grow as a person and as a clinical practitioner and achieve those goals?



The goal for this is for you to be able to showcase your experience to bring out all your best qualities, and to show how you've grown from the environment you live/grew up in and how that has made you into the unique individual you are today. You do not necessarily dedicate a specific section or part of your statement dedicated to 'international stuff.' It might flow more naturally and



coherently if you **integrate** that element throughout your personal statement as a whole.

Example

The example shown below, demonstrates how as an international applicant you can showcase your awareness of the challenges posed by different healthcare settings.

*“I was first exposed to this harsh discrepancy while interning with a paediatrician in the poverty-stricken area **of Peshawar, Pakistan**. Despite the hospital’s lack of resources, through my time in the NICU, on ward rounds and in the outpatient department clinic, I saw the collaboration between the multidisciplinary team to ensure patient safety. Watching doctors comfort a family that lost one of a pair of pre-mature twins due to sepsis, while still coming to terms with the causality themselves, ascertained the importance of empathy while maintaining composure in the face of adversity. As I listened and talked to patients about their ailments, I realised the gravity of these illnesses on their lives and the responsibility physicians have to improve them.”*

To access the full version of this personal statement written by an international applicant, please visit [here](#).

Your work experiences abroad may be different to those done in the UK, but the qualities and capabilities of a good doctor that you will experience and reflect on are the same everywhere! Focus on those qualities, like in this personal statement, where emphasis was placed on the importance of empathy and the responsibility of doctors to act in the face of adversity.



FAQs

We have tried to address major queries that you may have about personal statements throughout the eBook. Here are a few questions you may have about personal statements, and some of our guidance related to them.

1. When should I write my personal statement?

The first step to writing your personal statement is to decide what you want to include in it. After you have thought about what to include in your personal statement, start structuring it, ideally around the summer before your application cycle. Start early to ensure that you give yourself time to review it a few times and so you can provide others time to review your statement, and then you have time to incorporate the feedback. Use the personal statement planner we've included in this eBook for further guidance!

2. I don't have enough clinical work experience, what should I do?

It is important to remember that there are no fixed criteria of how much work experience you need to apply for medical school. Try to meet the objectives that you would aim to meet through work experience in alternative ways:

- Try to join virtual work experience opportunities and read through different online resources (such as NHS Careers) to understand what the role of a doctor involves and how that fits into healthcare as a whole
- Reflect on experiences you have been involved in, where you learned skills and developed qualities that are desirable in healthcare professionals. Learn about these from the GMC's [Good Medical Practice](#). These experiences do not have to be in clinical environments, they can be learned from volunteering, sporting, or any other relevant activities.

3. I haven't done any wider reading to include in my personal statement, what should I do?

The aim of wider reading is to show that you have an interest in healthcare which you have further pursued by reading books or articles about. Wider reading can be carried out any point in time, so you can include any piece of information that has sparked or fuelled your interest in medicine.



A common misconception may be that wider reading involves reading full books related to medicine. In fact, it involves engagement with any form of information source that you enjoyed and is related to an area of medicine you are interested in – this can be in the form of a book, podcast, documentary, online course, and the list goes on!

If you have not included any such form of wider reading in your personal statement, be prepared with wider reading around the areas you have mentioned in your statement for your interviews. Personal statements can be used a source for finding out more about your medical interests, so wider reading will help you in discussing these topics.



Resources

Best free Personal Statement resources

Alongside this eBook there are various other free resources available. Below we have included a range of materials which you may find useful when preparing to write your personal statement.

Note

There are many personal statement advice videos, blogs, eBooks etc. – a significant number may be sponsored by for-profit companies or may recommend paid-for services. Once again, the We Are Medics team does not endorse these. We are sharing these resources because some of the advice included is still extremely relevant, useful, and applicable.

Written resources

1. [Personal Statement Bank](#) – free examples, The Aspiring Medics
2. [Personal Statement blog](#) – free articles, Medic Mind
3. [Personal Statement blog](#) – free articles, We Are Medics

YouTube videos

Hearing about other medical students' experiences writing their personal statement can be a useful source of information. These videos offer helpful strategies to help you perfect your Medicine personal statement.

Journey 2 Med Videos

- [6 Top Tips](#)
- [6 Mistakes to avoid](#)
- [Work Experience Advice](#)

Other channels or videos

- [Aika Abi](#)
- [Atousa](#)
- [Post Grad Medic](#)



- [Kharma Medic](#)
- [Arun Kiru](#)

Personal Statement Planner

Use our personal statement planner, to help you set deadlines for the various stages of the writing process!

Reflection, mind-mapping and planning

Deadline: __/__/__

Before you even begin writing your personal statement, it is important to plan the content and develop a structure which works for you!

Introduction & conclusion

Deadline: __/__/__

The introduction is always the trickiest to write, and you may want to tackle this after writing the main body!

First draft!

Deadline: __/__/__

We recommend that you have a first draft ready by early September, even if this is over the character limit!

Final draft!

Deadline: __/__/__

You are likely to get through multiple drafts before the submission date. So, give yourself enough time to re-read and edit!

Proof-reading and reviewing

Deadline: __/__/__

Show your personal statement to a few trusted teachers, or family/friends to proof read. Ask them to use our marking criteria as guidance!

15 October 2021

UCAS application deadline



Personal Statement Bank

Personal Statements with Analysis

For the following personal statements, we have provided paragraph by paragraph analysis. The purpose of including a variety of different personal statements for you to read and reflect upon, is to firstly demonstrate that there is no 'perfect' personal statement. Despite the differences in content and writing styles, all our examples below are those of successful personal statements. Secondly, we hope that by reading through the following examples, you will further understand how to incorporate the tips and tricks we have mentioned throughout this eBook into fantastic personal statements!

Personal Statement 1

This personal statement was used by a current medical student to apply to medical school at the **University of Birmingham, the University of Oxford, University of Leicester, and the Imperial College London**. The application cycle was 2018 entry. The applicant received interviews the University of Oxford, University of Birmingham and University of Leicester and then offers from the latter two medical schools.

"Having seen relatives go through the plight of cancer, I've understood that whether the prognosis of a disease offers hope to the patient or not, a doctor's role is to maximise the patient's quality of life. This is true in the case of many people with chronic conditions, such as COPD. Encountering patients suffering such conditions during work experience and reading 'Every Patient Tells a Story' have taught me that a doctor takes scientific knowledge to a patient's bedside to make a difference to their welfare. It is this aspect of medicine that interests me most and the concept of quality of life which links to the debates surrounding many medical dilemmas such as when it's right to withdraw treatment from a terminally ill patient. Doing debating has taught me to see issues from different perspectives, this will be useful when I'm faced with ethical scenarios."

The applicant shows a thorough understanding and reflection on their **motivation** to pursue medicine. They reflect deeply using personal experience on how having a career in could make a difference to others, whilst also



highlighting transferrable skills from non-medical extracurricular activities and they will be applicable to clinical practice.

"I became curious about medical ethics after encountering a cardiac patient who refused treatment as he doubted its effectiveness. This highlighted the importance of patient autonomy; although the doctor tried to explain to the patient why he needed to take the medication, ultimately it was his decision to take it or not. During this placement, I also understood how there are different therapies such as pacemakers for cardiac conditions and the choice of therapy varied due to factors like age and willingness to undergo surgery. Medicine incorporates both theory and practical skills such as taking ECGs, which I attempted at the UNIQ summer school. I was intrigued to see how slight variations in the PQRST waves can correspond to problems at different parts of the cardiac cycle and how doctors have to observe fine details to diagnose conditions. Playing tennis and badminton have taught me challenging new skills, to be resilient and to maintain a work life balance. At my A& E placement, I saw multidisciplinary team meetings which showed the significance of leadership and teamwork in medicine. I developed these skills through organising activities for autistic children at my previous school; I had to work as part of a team of mentors and supervise sports. Interacting with the children and providing reassurance when they were stressed taught me to adapt the way I communicated. I practiced these skills further by speaking to a cardiac patient during my work experience, and I realised that open-ended questions allow doctors to gather information about the patient's medical history, which may be crucial to making a diagnosis."

They show **reflection** and engagement throughout work experience with different aspects of medicine, including both the scientific (cardiac cycle) and human (medical ethics/patient autonomy) elements.

Again, they reflect on transferrable skills from non-medical engagements and extracurriculars, relating them to clinical practice and skills that are significantly important in a clinical environment, such as communication skills, and consider their impact and importance. For example, specific skills learned through their engagement with planning sessions for autistic children has helped them in a clinical situation when speaking to and comforting the patient, and how they have developed further based on that experience.

However, they could have elaborated further on the importance of maintaining a **work-life balance** for them and its value when working in a high-pressure environment such as healthcare settings, and how playing badminton and tennis have helped them. This may not have been possible due to the character



count – in that case, it might have been better to group the experiences on which they've deeply reflected in terms of their relationship with clinical practice in one paragraph (work experience, UNIQ summer school, A&E placement, organising activities for autistic children), and place the others which they were not able to reflect on as deeply in a separate one or include them right at the end.

“Medicine requires the development of empathic relationships with patients while displaying professionalism, and this was a skill I developed through volunteering at a special needs school where I learnt to remain patient when faced with situations such as a child exhibiting difficult behaviour and tried to understand why they may be behaving that way. Since each child had different learning difficulties, I had to understand their individual needs and behave; accordingly, some children preferred to be left alone while others liked to interact.”

Here the applicant succinctly describes their experience, reflects on specific lessons learned and how they have grown through their engagement with children with special needs, and related this back to the need for developing empathic relationships in medicine which is an important skill to showcase in any personal statement.

“Doing my EPQ on antibiotic resistance introduced me to the world of academic literature, something a doctor relies on to ensure that they are aware of changing medical practices. A topic that intrigued me was how the CRISPR-cas system can be used to selectively kill bacterial populations without damaging commensal ones. This could revolutionise medicine as antibiotic resistance currently increases both economic costs and mortality rates. It has inspired me to want to do medical research as well as being a clinician because research is at the forefront of solving problems in the medical field and advancing patient care.

Ultimately, I am excited to embark on a career that allows me to delve into the world of medical research, which is currently focusing a lot on the specificity of treatments such as targeted cancer therapies and to see the impact of these developments on patients first hand in clinical practice.”

To further highlight their interest in science and academic medicine, the applicant describes how their project relates to the wider concept of medical research. Throughout this personal statement we get sense of the applicants' personal interests and passions, as well as how they have sought to explore these.



This is an example of a personal statement that takes into account different aspects of practicing medicine, both the scientific and human elements, reflects on them, and relates them to experiences they've encountered and engagements they've undertaken that help them grow the skills required to become a well-rounded doctor. The succinct description and deep reflection allow the reader to understand the applicant's experiences and relate to the lessons they've learned.

Personal Statement 2

This personal statement was used by a current medical student to apply to medical school at, the **University of Birmingham, the University of Nottingham, University of Liverpool, and the University of Sheffield**. The application cycle was 2017 entry. The applicant received interviews and then offers at all four medical schools.

"A career in medicine will help me achieve my passion for understanding the workings of the human body while caring for others. Medicine is a science that is not entrenched in its ways and is constantly expanding, allowing me to learn as I work."

A brief introduction. This is not overly wordy and succinctly describes the applicants reasoning for wishing to study medicine. Moreover, the final sentence of this introduction explains how they understand the way in which medicine progresses – research.

"At the County Hospital, I gained real insight into my near future as I interacted with a junior doctor on his rounds. Shadowing a paediatrician, I observed care of patients with bronchiolitis. Diagnoses were made through investigations such as blood and ultrasound tests in conjunction with meticulous attention to vital signs. This application of science on the job drove my thirst for studying medicine. I saw how allied healthcare professionals, such as physiotherapists, work in collaboration with consultants as a cohesive MDT to ensure patients' needs were met. This allowed for everyone's opinions to be considered to ensure effective communication."

Here the applicant makes a descriptive point summarising what they saw during work experience, showing an awareness of the diagnostic process which reinforced their passions and informed their learning. The final few sentences touch on the attributes of a multi-disciplinary team, and why they are so important.



“For a year I have worked with children with severe cerebral palsy, learning basic Makaton to overcome their issues with verbal communication. With one boy, I interpreted his unique communication, specifically physical, becoming more empathetic to his situation as I understood his needs and catered to them; I now work with him to perform tasks. I successfully prioritised activities competing for my time and grew to understand when to ask for guidance. I realised that working in healthcare isn't always about a cure but often about improving quality of life. The children were treated as individuals in accordance to their needs, highlighting the importance of tailored care to patients.”

Here, a few different aspects have been discussed. The applicant shows just how involved and committed they have been to their voluntary position. Learning Makaton shows a desire to improve their communication skills. A key attribute of both medical students and doctors, empathy, is also brought to light. In this paragraph, there is a large emphasis on the applicant's personal roles, responsibilities and actions as opposed to that of a larger group or team. Prioritisation and asking for guidance when needed are massively important as both a medical student and doctor. Through their volunteering the applicant states how they have begun to develop these skills.

“Working with YMCA, I have needed sensitivity and respect when conducting focus groups with transgender young adults to ensure they feel valued. During this survey for the CCG, concerns were raised about the lack of autonomy around whether they were placed in a male or female recovery ward. This demonstrated the importance of patient input in hospital practices.”

Here, the applicant stresses the ethical principle of autonomy and that ethical scenarios are from just hypothetical issue but they (along with science and other factors) drive changes in medicine. To improve further, they could have also mentioned and reflected upon any wider reading they had undertaken about the debate surrounding this ethical issue.

“At BrightMed, by spending time with medical students, I have gained a valuable insight into the realities of medical training and practice. Exercises in taking patient histories conveyed to me the diligent approach taken to grasp a patient's situation. In conjunction with shadowing an endocrinologist, this made me appreciate that with experience, deviation from the rigid structure for taking histories was key in order to fully understand a patient. After spending time in a dissection room, my intrigue into the workings of the human body grew as I was given the opportunity to conduct a limb dissection. Designing an antihypertensive drug stretched my problem-solving abilities



and taught me to follow advice, as opposed to lead. On Gold D of E I enjoyed working cooperatively within a team to be self-sufficient on a 4 day expedition. Involving everyone in decision making was crucial, particularly for the navigation."

History taking forms a huge part of your future medical education. Building your understanding of this through different experiences shows that you have thought beyond just the surface level of a doctor-patient interaction and will really help your personal statement stand out. The applicant then goes on to show how they have demonstrated key problem solving, strategic thinking and teamwork skills through their extra-curricular roles.

"I attended a 'Biology in Action' lecture day and was especially interested by a class on palliative medicine. I learnt that the politics and role of doctors is changing, with them now caring more palliatively for people with complex chronic conditions. Following this, I read "A Very Short Introduction to Medical Ethics" and now have ways of considering an array of dilemmas faced by healthcare professionals on a daily basis. This book gave me a framework to think critically about treatments and end of life care. With new, innovative treatments pushing boundaries, this has become more necessary to a changing NHS. These are issues we have debated at the college Medical Society."

Understanding how the NHS is changing is vital for medical students – current or prospective. This is both in the way the population is changing and in how the NHS decides to treat people. The applicant shows that they are aware of these changes but could use a specific example to convey a deeper understanding of them.

"I am ambitious and driven, giving full commitment to activities such as playing the bass guitar in the school's jazz band. Playing football relieves stress and helps me balance workload and relaxation."

Showing other interests and passions outside of medicine, in your personal statement build a better picture of you for the admissions tutor, It also allows them to see if and how you will be able to cope with the strong academic loads of medicine.

"Through my experiences, I believe I understand the unglamorous, challenging nature of medicine. I hope I have shown my suitability and aspire to be one of tomorrow's doctors."

In this conclusion, the applicant shows realism in understanding the gritty and demanding nature of medicine which they have been made more aware of



through their experiences. This is important and further shows the commitment and determination of the applicant to pursue medicine despite the inevitable challenges.

Personal Statement 3

This personal statement was used by a current medical student to apply to medical school at, the **University of Birmingham, the University of Bristol, University of Liverpool, and the University of Nottingham**. The application cycle was 2019 entry. The applicant received interviews and then offers at all four medical schools.

“Like many people, I’ve been exposed to the cruelty disease can inflict on our lives. My grandparents have both suffered from different diseases: something which, when looking into their conditions, led me to discover my fascination with the study of the human body and illnesses that affect its natural workings. My grandmother survived her cancer, but my grandfather is dying from a terminal condition. This has driven me to pursue a career in medicine: to be at the heart of a field that strives to cure disease and, when necessary, to make someone’s end of life as dignified as possible.”

From the beginning of the statement the applicant has made their motivation to study medicine clear, avoiding clichés and backing up their claims with real life experiences. What makes this statement stand out is the honesty with which the student writes, identifying that they know medicine is not always about saving people, it’s sometimes about making end of life care as dignified as possible.

“During work experience on a Cardiothoracic Ward I saw how the nurses I spent time with one day were also involved with the patients I met in the surgeon’s clinic the next; and how many other specialities are vital in caring for patients. Seeing this multidisciplinary team, showed me that being a good team worker and communicator is fundamental for working in the NHS. I feel I have developed these communication skills over the past two years, through volunteering at Beaver Scouts where I worked in a team to arrange activities and as a leader to carry them out. I’ve dealt with challenging behaviour from children with extra needs, whilst still caring for the others: something I hope has equipped me to deal with some of the more challenging situations I will encounter as a doctor.”

“A fact that resonated with me during work experience on a Psychiatric Ward was how patients felt that their time in hospital had been dramatically improved by the consultant making an effort to get to know them as people, not just illnesses. I took this on-board when volunteering in an EMI nursing home, I spent time speaking to



residents to understand them, beyond their conditions – something I was commended for by patients and nurses. These experiences highlighted the importance for patients that their doctors exhibit empathy and helped me deepen my compassion towards the patients I met.”

To limit characters, the applicant has used single experiences to discuss multiple attributes that they believe are important for medical professionals to exhibit. Again, to avoid clichés, the student has delved deeper into what makes a good doctor, discussing not only the obvious “compassion and empathy”, but looking at the ability to work in a multidisciplinary team and to handle difficult situations.

“My A-Level subjects have further fuelled my love for Science. Firsthand, experiments, such as heart dissections, are captivating ways of seeing the subject come to life and have stimulated my intellectual curiosity surrounding the biochemical processes required to maintain life. My Geography coursework also had a medical angle: “An Assessment of the Factors Affecting Engagement in Preventative Health Services” explores barriers to healthcare and looks at public health in more detail.”

Instead of simply saying that they enjoy science, the applicant talks about specific aspects of their A Level courses that have particularly spiked their interests, with this demonstrating greater engagement in the subjects and is more effective than plainly stating that biology is your favourite subject.

“ I always seek to learn more about the profession and reading books such as ‘Do No Harm’ by Henry March, have helped me gain not only a deeper understanding of medical science but the emotional struggles a surgeon faces. I’ve been involved in tutoring and mentoring younger students throughout my time at school and their progress is something I take great pride in. I know how important it is for medical professionals to be able to mentor and teach others, and hope to soon be able to teach the next generation of doctors, as well as practice medicine.”

Another aspect of this personal statement is how it identifies that the medical field is not just about treating patients, but it’s also about teaching the future generations of doctors, so the fact that they have identified this and stated their passion for this, is very clever.

“Outside of my studies, I love literature and spend a lot of time reading, allowing me to escape from the stresses of school. I also love outdoor activities; I walk and hike regularly and spend a week every year in Wales where I canoe, rock climb and abseil.



Though ostensibly hobbies, they have improved my resilience and ability to face challenges, helping me to stay calm in often dangerous situations.”

In order to show that they you are a well-rounded person, something which medical schools traditionally look for, the applicant has not only discussed her hobbies, but also reflected on them with regards to how they could be of help to her as a future doctor, ensuring that every word used helps paint a picture of them as an ideal candidate.

I am excited by the prospect of taking the next step to my ultimate goal: to be a doctor and to make a difference in people’s lives. The work experience I have independently sought has cemented my determination: although I’ve seen great sadness as a patient was told they had terminal cancer, I saw that the professional sensitivity of the doctor made that moment more bearable for all involved. I acknowledge the challenges I will face; but also know that they will be outweighed by practising a subject I have a true passion for each day of my professional life.”

Overall, this personal statement is written in a style that demonstrates the student’s literary proficiency whilst still being succinct enough to portray a wide range of experiences and reflections in the limited word count. The conclusion, ties together the whole personal statement very well and leaves a lasting impression on the reader.



Example Personal Statements

For the following five personal statement examples, we highly recommend that you have a careful read through them and think critically about the following questions.

- Do you get a real sense of the applicant's passion and motivations for studying medicine?
- How does the applicant incorporate concise and original examples of reflection?
- How do you think they could have improved on their personal statement?



Personal Statement 4

This personal statement was used by a current medical student to apply to medical school at the **University of Birmingham, King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, and St Georges' University**. The application cycle was 2017 entry. The applicant received interviews and then offers at all four medical schools.

"Medicine appeals to me due to its scientific approach and how principles can manifest into results. Academic studies have enhanced my desire for intellectual stimulation and the constant need to ask 'why?' This curiosity, combined with a genuine ambition to help those in need, motivates me to become a doctor. My keen interest led me to read medical articles and books, such as Marsh's 'Do No Harm', whose perseverance and dedication to medicine has inspired me to contribute equally to the community.

Volunteering weekly at the Neonatal Unit has allowed me to explore the medical profession from an everyday perspective. It has taught me the skills needed to face difficult situations such as supporting family members when withdrawal of care is necessary. From this, I have learnt the importance of balancing empathy and objectivity to make decisions best for the patient and came to appreciate that medicine cannot always provide solutions. Despite this, I have seen the astonishing impact that medicine can have on a neonate's recovery, which encouraged me to research into the critical stages of human development and teratogenicity. Together with the study of physiology in Biology, this inspired my EPQ topic: The Impact of Illicit Drugs and Alcohol on Prenatal Development.



Work experience at Shropshire Women and Children's Centre allowed me to observe an external cephalic version on a 38-week pregnant woman, which involved the manual movement of a breech baby to avoid a caesarean section. I noted that the doctor had to balance maternal discomfort against the risk of preterm labour in the clinical decision making, showing me the importance of autonomy and communication as the doctor reassured the anxious mother by explaining the procedure clearly. I witnessed the full patient journey when accompanying a midwife during home visits. During work experience in both radiology and cardiology, I observed a coronary angiogram, where both specialities worked together, emphasising the importance of teamwork between multidisciplinary units. Work experience in these health specialities, as well as general practice and orthoptics, has shown me the essential bioethical principles such as beneficence and fidelity which are found in every aspect of patient care. A month's exposure to a range of procedures and cases in a gastroenterology institute in India has given me a greater understanding of the disparities in healthcare, but also an insight into the many facets of a medical career.

As a St John Ambulance cadet first aider, I have seen the necessity of a calm approach in healthcare, my problem-solving skills and perseverance being tested in pressured settings. During my Duke of Edinburgh Silver expedition, I developed my teamwork skills when overcoming obstacles and motivating my team. Last year, as a Fairtrade Ambassador, I managed the school committee and organised charity events. This, together with my enthusiasm for leadership, led me to be appointed Deputy Head Girl in charge of integration, where I am organising a new mentoring and support scheme. I have mentored younger pupils for the last four years, which has helped me to present relevant information in a logical and precise manner.

For the past four years, I have volunteered at Brownies and community fundraising events regularly. At a local care home, I have enjoyed engaging and organising activities for the elderly, which has further developed my confidence and communication skills. I utilised these skills when assisting the phlebotomists at Prostate Cancer Awareness events. Swimming, craft work and doing intricate henna designs have been hobbies which have helped me fundraise for 'Save the Children' and other charitable causes.

With the knowledge I have acquired, I believe I have gained the necessary attributes needed to meet the intellectual challenges of the course and look forward to dedicating myself to serving the community in the lifelong, caring and rewarding role of a doctor."

Personal Statement 5



This personal statement was used by a current medical student to apply to medical school at, the **University of Birmingham, the University of Southampton, Cardiff University, and the University of Bristol**. The application cycle was 2016 entry. The applicant received interview offers at Birmingham, Bristol and Cardiff.

“3.5 million people in the UK affected by type 2 diabetes, and 2.3 million people in the UK affected by coronary heart disease. Studying diseases like these in Biology has fuelled my interest in health and disease, motivating me to study Medicine. I have also enjoyed linking theoretical chemistry to its applications in health, such as enantiomers and drugs. My enthusiasm for medicine is driven by my interest in health-related science and by the fulfilment of ultimately using my knowledge to improve the lives of others.

To begin to appreciate the diversity of the medical profession, I spent a day shadowing a research doctor investigating a new tuberculosis vaccine. Watching the clinical trials helped me to appreciate the importance of putting patients at ease, so they were more likely to confide in their doctor. Later, whilst shadowing a knee surgeon for four days, I witnessed the importance of decision-making, as every patient has different expectations for their recovery. I found it fascinating how patients with similar injuries could be treated differently with either surgery or physiotherapy. Attending several medical career days also demonstrated to me how, as a doctor, I would not be able to cure every patient and that I would have to develop the resilience to deal with this.

Shadowing a GP for a week introduced me to the holistic approach to patient care, as patients often rely on their GP for emotional support as well as diagnosis and treatment. It was moving to see how the empathy and emotional support of the doctor encouraged a patient with sleeping issues to open up about her previous struggles with depression. This was important as it allowed the doctor to discuss her ‘normal’ test results with sensitivity, aware that the patient was probably suffering with depression again, rather than any other condition. Additionally, volunteering weekly for seven months with adults with learning disabilities has been hugely rewarding, enabling me to better understand the impacts of lifelong impairment, and the necessity for lifelong living support.

When studying coronary heart disease and its risk factors in Biology I was particularly interested in the link between diet and health, so I was excited to attend a lecture on the importance of milk in our diet. The link between the cultural shifts in diet and the response of the medical profession especially interested me. I then further explored



this idea in the Student BMJ, where the link between sugary drinks and type 2 diabetes was discussed and the possible public health responses considered.

Whilst reading 'Bad Science' I found Ben Goldacre's discussion of homeopathy's efficacy and its link to the placebo effect very engaging; this led me to consider whether an ethical placebo would ever be possible.

To maintain a healthy work-life balance I participate in the debate club at school, finding that debating alleviates stress as well as developing my reasoning skills. At home, cycling in the local forest helps to clear my mind. Through my roles as a prefect for Year 7 and as a Young Leader for three years at Brownies, I have developed my leadership and communication styles by adapting them to different audiences. My involvement in Young Enterprise and organising prom has demonstrated the difficulties of decision-making within a team and how sometimes compromise is crucial. This August, I was thrilled to represent the UK in Japan at the World Scout Jamboree alongside 34,000 young people. Preparing for this by fundraising £3250 and attending training weekends has taught me exceptional time-management and organisation skills.

I believe I have the determination and commitment, together with the academic capability required for medicine. The prospect of a career in medicine excites me and I am ready to embrace the challenges it presents, in particular the lifelong learning. Most importantly, I am looking forward to making a real difference in the lives of others."

Personal Statement 6

This personal statement was used by a current medical student to apply to medical school at, the **University of Birmingham, the University of Keele, University of Exeter, and the University of Cardiff**. The application cycle was 2017 entry. The applicant received interviews and then offers from all four medical schools.

"The GMC have stated key qualities that all doctors must have; a few are teamwork, being supportive and effective communication. Through my caring experiences I believe I can develop into such doctor and I feel driven to do this.

I work as a medical assessor once a month aiding people in the night time economy with a charity called 'Vennture'. It is my responsibility to help care for people on the streets of Hereford. An individual's health when inebriated is volatile so it is often a highly stressful job and has taught me how to deal with the pressure whilst keeping a



calm thinking ability. One challenging experience was having to console an intoxicated man who had just been faced with a bereavement. I felt emotional whilst listening, but I knew I had to control myself and handle the situation with compassion. One thing I learnt from this was how much a difference it makes to simply listen.

As part of my research into medicine I organised a placement in a hospice, to gain a realistic idea about the emotional strains a doctor has to face. I spoke to a nurse about how she copes with her own emotions when working with terminally ill patients. Her reply was that there is no trick; she does get emotionally attached to patients and when they die, she spends some reflective time at home to grieve. From this conversation I was able to really understand the emotional dedication that is needed in medicine. I have learnt that doctors are always part of a multi-disciplinary team and that a balance must be established between friendly interactions - to assure successful communications - and a clear understanding of roles and duties so that the team works effectively.

I have been the captain of my netball team at sixth form, a member of a nursing home care team and a medical assessor in a general receiving house. In all these roles I have a job to do as an individual but also have a responsibility to work with other members to ensure the bigger outcome is reached.

During my GP placements I have realised the importance of holistic care. An empathetic doctor can create a connection with the patient and trust is established. Working in a nursing home has prepared me for the inevitable reality of ageing and the implications age has on health. I have learnt to adapt my communications skills in order to make conversations effective. One resident has dementia. To engage her in conversation I will ask her questions about her books and listen to her talk. I find this is really effective, she enjoys being listened to. I spent time at a hospital shadowing doctors. One insightful chat I had with a doctor, was about the ethics and sensitivity behind the DNR forms and how difficult it is to take such decisions.

Medicine is a very active field and doctors must be up to date and be devoted to a lifetime of learning. In my high school I won the Triple Science Award and am currently starting my EPQ on NHS budgeting. This project is really benefitting my research and analytical skills and requires me to focus on time management. As of November, I will be involved in a maths mentoring scheme. I am looking forward to supporting pupils in their education and improving my leadership and teaching skills. I will develop my skills of interaction at the opposite end of the age range from my nursing home experience.

My hobbies are running, exercising and skiing. I enjoy playing the piano and doing yoga as a means of relaxation. I had been a member of my local drama group for



three years and have been a part of several stage performances. I know I have the caring personality and capacity to deal with the heavy workload that are needed for medicine. I am well informed about the highs and lows that come with a life in medicine and how it requires full time commitment and some personal sacrifices. Nonetheless I have a strong desire to become involved with such a fulfilling vocation and believe my skills match the criteria to become an effective medical practitioner.”

Personal Statement 7

This personal statement was used by a current graduate medical student to apply to medical school. This applicant received offers at medical schools for the graduate entry course, having previously studied **Biomedical Sciences** as their undergraduate degree.

“My desire to study medicine cannot be attributed to a single phenomenon or traced back to a precise ‘lightbulb-flashing’ moment. Instead, it is steadfast and evolving, honed by years of commitment and curiosity - which resonates in the valuable NHS experiences I have seized. I enjoyed studying the complex elements driving health and disease states throughout my Biomedical Science degree, which I earned First Class Honours in; but I knew that my interests lay beyond the confines of the lab. Each module fascinated me but learning through pro-sections in Human Anatomy was a particular highlight, which led me to return this year as a practical demonstrator.

Working alongside my studies was a challenge I overcame with meticulous time management. My role as anti-coagulation assistant, since June 2015, gives me a realistic grasp of what working in the NHS means. Daily, I overcome the challenges of working in an understaffed department with efficiency and patience. An example is when I noted the detrimental effects of an outdated clinic diary system; I took the initiative to create and apply a new template, which has since improved patient waiting times considerably. Effective communication is essential, as I liaise with members of the multi-disciplinary team to manage patients. I work carefully to safeguard patient confidentiality, as I independently prioritise and process referrals to create clinics. This requires plenty of responsibility, as does conducting INR testing in clinics, where I also support my team of nurse specialists in counselling patients. This patient exposure is deeply rewarding; it is heart-warming to see the 82-year-old lady who gets up at 6am to look her best for us, or the waving gentleman with failing eyesight who still spots me from afar. Besides humbling me, these moments serve as the strongest incentive to keep going in the face of drawbacks.

My work experiences were also insightful and consolidated my career choice. Assisting in consultant-led haematology clinics, I noted that by showing interest in the patient



and maintaining eye contact, the clinician built a relationship of mutual understanding. Furthermore, techniques such as summarising and signposting gathered information quickly and effectively to guide treatment. Contrarily, whilst shadowing my local GP I was reacquainted with the unpredictability of disease during a consultation with a young girl, whose brain tumour had diminished her quality of life. Putting my sadness aside, I observed the GP's professional detachment and reflected on the importance of being resilient in this career. I also faced challenges whilst volunteering as a dining companion on the wards, when certain patients would refuse food despite their malnourished state. I tried my best to feed patients/promote eating, but sometimes I had to walk away and respect the patient's autonomy, even though it went against my instincts.

I consider myself to be a compassionate person. This is reflected in my role as a part time carer for my grandfather, to whom I provide everyday support in hygiene and administering medication. I also make time for charities such as Humanity First, Breast Cancer care and Team Up. My participation ranges from marshalling at walks, to working behind the scenes in logistics. Recently, I had the privilege of being appointed Youth Group leader for young girls in my local community. I mentor the girls weekly in workshops, tackling issues such as bullying, teaching Urdu, baking, and arts and crafts.

My hobbies include swimming and horse-riding, as they are fun ways to stay fit. I also enjoy reading stimulating literature – recently I read “The immortal life of Henrietta Lacks”, which enlightened me on the evolution of medical ethics and the importance of informed consent. I am confident a medical career is right for me. I recognise there will be challenges, but I believe that my realistic expectations, maturity, and resolve, allow me the capability to overcome these. I hope you will allow me the opportunity to prove so.”

Personal Statement 8

This personal statement was used by a current graduate medical student to apply to medical school. This applicant received offers at medical schools for the graduate entry course, having previously studied **Master of Pharmacy** as their undergraduate degree.

“As a hospital pre-registration pharmacist, I have had the opportunity to witness doctors' application of clinical knowledge during decision making and their devotion and empathy towards patients. This has deepened my admiration for clinical practice and reinforced my aspiration to become a doctor. Working alongside clinicians has strengthened my desire to gain a deeper understanding of the human body and my desire to play an integral role in differential diagnosis to assist patients.



Pharmacy has helped me to develop a broad range of skills necessary to study medicine. At Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust (HEFT), I liaise within an MDT to provide patient-centred care and deliver an efficient and seamless service, especially when undertaking ward-based medicine management. I take accurate drug histories from patients through the use of pertinent questions and observation skills. Using my professional judgement in the interest of patient safety allows me to readily detect and reduce the occurrence of medication errors. Furthermore, I have also gained a comprehensive understanding of the diverse range of patients in primary and secondary care, which has taught me how to adapt the way I communicate to meet my patients' unique needs. I understand the importance of patient confidentiality and safeguarding vulnerable adults and children as well. These attributes that I have developed will help me to become a safer, efficient and confident clinician in the future.

Due to my clinical rotations at HEFT I have developed a particular interest in genetic disorders. I recently met a patient who had been diagnosed with Shapiro Syndrome. I took this opportunity to converse with the patient which helped me gain an understanding of the disorder and the pharmacological treatment involved. My rotation within cancer services, including a placement at Marie Curie Hospice, has shown me how the Liverpool Care Pathway is implemented and helped me understand the importance of empathy. I shadowed consultant haematologists in various roles at Heartlands hospital including haematology clinics and ward rounds. I observed a doctor administer chemotherapy via the intrathecal route and witnessed a patient with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia receive a bone marrow transplant. In addition, I saw the importance of clinical trials in the treatment of cancer and conversed with patients at different stages of their treatment. These experiences have made me appreciate the physical and emotional demands of a career in medicine. Next summer I will be undergoing a placement at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Pakistan, which will offer me an insight into current healthcare issues where resources are limited. Moreover, I remain up-to-date with treatment changes by reading the PJ, BMJ and NICE Guidance and to reflect on my learning I regularly complete CPDs. My technical knowledge is compounded by my First-Class Honours in my Master of Pharmacy degree which provides me with an excellent base of biological and pharmacological knowledge.

Besides my interest in medicine, I also enjoy playing sport; I was part of the University football team and I swim regularly. Furthermore, I play an active part within the local community, having previously volunteered for a local care home, Barnardo's Charity shop and the Anthony Nolan Trust. Currently, I am a volunteer for Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity. During my pharmacy degree, I was the Aston University



Student Champion for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. Through this role, I learnt leadership, organisational and interpersonal skills, which have helped both my personal and academic development.

In conclusion, my role in pharmacy and the NHS has provided me with first-hand experience and essential qualities that have bettered me as a person and applicant. Being a hardworking and driven individual, I believe I have the ability to be an excellent medical school student and thereafter a successful doctor within the NHS.”

To read more examples of graduate entry personal statements, please visit [here](#).



Example Marking Criteria

In this section you will find example mark schemes, for you to use and give to teachers and friends, when they review your personal statement. We have compiled the most relevant advice, which is largely applicable to all medical schools, into mark schemes relating to the following three components of the personal statement.



- **Motivation**
- **Exploration and understanding**
- **Suitability**

This will enable you to effectively grade your personal statement, from 'Level 1 to Level 5' and identify areas for improvement. In addition to marking your personal statement as one whole written piece, you can use the mark schemes on a paragraph by paragraph basis, assigning yourself a level for each section. This will allow you to identify any specific weaknesses.

Please note, that these mark schemes are not a replication of those used by individual medical schools to assess your personal statement. We have created them purely as a guide, to aid you in reviewing and editing your personal statement.



Motivation

Level 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An effective introduction and conclusion, which fully explore your motivation to study medicine.• You have alluded to many different aspects of a medical career and explained why they personally appeal to you, using personal examples where possible to demonstrate this.• Throughout your personal statement you have shown how your experiences and insights gained, have further reinforced your ambition to study medicine.
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have fully explored your reasons to study medicine and have clearly stated these in your introduction and/or conclusion.• To increase the power and effectiveness of your introduction, you should have related your motivations to personal examples and experiences.
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You state your reasons for studying medicine but fail to elaborate and reflect upon all of the points you have made. For example, you delve further into why you love science but fail to elaborate sufficiently on why enjoy caring for people.
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When discussing your motivations, you have made 'blank' or superficial statements without elaborating further, such as '<i>I am passionate about science</i>'.• You may have also included words and phrases which are considered to be cliché.
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have either made little to no mention of your personal motivation to pursue a career in medicine, or the overuse of complex and flowery language has meant that your reasons for wanting to study medicine have been lost.



Exploration and understanding

Level 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This personal statement makes mention of a variety of activities (work experience/ volunteering/ wider reading/ extra-curriculars) undertaken to enhance your understanding of a career in medicine.• You have not simply listed your experiences but reflected on them and emphasised unique learning points, explaining how they will be relevant to your future career as a clinician.• You have specifically stated your role, as opposed to the role of others or the whole team when discussing these activities.• Where possible, you have shown that you have a wide understanding of the key skills and attributes of doctor, beyond that of just <i>'empathy'</i> and <i>'communication'</i> for example.
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a good balance between the different experiences and activities you have included. For example, you have been careful not to under emphasise wider reading or extra-curricular activities.• Your writing conveys a strong sense of reflective practice, for each experience you have stated what you learned either about yourself, the healthcare system, or the role of a doctor.• You have made some attempt to be original and specific with the insights mentioned.
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have clearly tried to learn more about medicine as a career path, which is evidenced by the variety of experiences you have referred to in your personal statement.• It is clear that you have made <i>some attempt</i> at structured reflection, however at times you can focus too much on descriptions of what happened or what you saw.• You have <i>not included</i> many unique learning points or insights.
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whilst you have included many examples of experiences and activities designed to further your exploration into the profession, you have either listed these without reflection or elaboration or focussed too much on unnecessary details and description.
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have included very few examples of activities undertaken to gain a deeper insight into the realities of a career in medicine.• Where you mention your activities, you have resorted to listing them rather than reflecting deeply on the insights gained.



Suitability

Level 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In this personal statement, you have included many examples of how you have developed qualities relevant to a career in medicine.• You have made mention of less well-known attributes such as '<i>critical thinking skills</i>' and '<i>professionalism</i>' and used specific examples from personal experiences to show how you have applied these skills.• You have deeply reflected on any voluntary positions, jobs, or extra-curricular activities, focussing on your personal responsibilities and the skills you gained.• Moreover, you have made a good attempt to emphasise how the qualities you have developed will be relevant to you as a future clinician.• You may have also made links between what you have learnt and you have observed about the role of a healthcare professional during your work experience.
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You make effective use of reflective frameworks, such as the 'STARR' approach to clearly demonstrate the qualities and skills you have developed through each of your experiences.• There is a good balance between the different types of skills you have alluded to and you have been careful not to repeat certain attributes.• However, you have made little attempt to highlight the applicability of the skills you have learnt to a career in medicine.
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whilst you have written about the wide variety of skills you have gained through your extra-curricular activities. You fail to specifically mention your personal actions and responsibilities, which led to the development of these skills.• An example of this would be to say you have developed strong communication skills through volunteering at a hospice but neglecting to mention exactly what you did on a daily basis to develop these skills.
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When discussing your suitability for career in medicine, you have largely sought to evidence each of your personal qualities with relevant examples which include voluntary roles, extra-curricular activities, or any part-time jobs.• However, you have only touched on a narrow range of skills, repeating certain qualities and/or under-emphasising others.



Level 1

- You have stated that you possess the key qualities and attributes or have begun to develop them, for example *teamwork, organisational and leadership* skills to name a few.
- However, you have simply listed or made mention of these characteristics rather than evidencing your claims with extra-curricular or voluntary positions which have helped you to develop these skills.