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## Personal Statements for Job Applications

Increasingly, job application forms are asking candidates to complete a section which outlines their suitability for the job. Here the responsibility lies very much with the applicant to provide the right information. Employers cannot make an informed judgement about you if you don't provide the information that they want. So how do you know what the employer wants and how can you present that information in a way that is meaningful to the assessor?

### Where to start:

Firstly, be absolutely clear about what is required of you – make sure you understand any instructions and follow them to the letter. Have they specified a structure or asked for any specific information? Is there a word count? Familiarise yourself with the Job Description and Person Specification – being mindful what will be assessed from the application form.

Ensure that you are able to meet all the essential requirements of the job and as far as possible, as many of the desirable requirements as you can. Think about how you will evidence your ability to meet the requirements. What examples can you give to back up your claims?

Write in a style which is true to yourself and which reflects your enthusiasm for the role but remain professional throughout. Try not to be “chatty” – this is a formal piece of writing and as such needs to be well structured and informative. However, you want your personal statement to stand out from others and to capture the attention of the assessor. You need to make your opening paragraph as strong as you can. Back up all your claims with evidence and make all your statements meaningful.

### How to structure your Personal Statement

Employers will be reading a lot of personal statements for each job vacancy so make it easy for them to find the information which is relevant to them. Use short, well-structured sentences. Long sentences or paragraphs are harder to digest and the reader may miss some of your vital evidence. Organise your statement to provide the information that they need in a way that is meaningful to them. For example, you can use the headings in Person Specification to organise your writing which makes it easier for the selector to cross reference your evidence against their specification.

Using sub headings will also help you when planning what you want to write. You can start by writing some bullet points under each heading which you can then flesh out with more detail and examples.

### So what should you include?

Each Personal Statement you write should be different from your last. It must be tailored to the job description and person specification of the job that you are currently applying for. NEVER be

tempted to just cut and paste from a previous application. Your lack of focus will be spotted immediately and it is likely that your application will be rejected. Don't be tempted to ask the assessor to refer to your CV or covering letter.

Back up your claims with examples. By providing evidence of what you have achieved you are showing that you can apply your skills in real life situations. You can also demonstrate how you have grown and developed your skills and knowledge, or how you have added value to the organisation. Where possible relate your skills to the requirements of the job. For example: the person specification may demand excellent oral and written communication skills but the job description may include taking minutes, talking with clients over the phone and giving presentations. If you have done these specific things before it would be useful to mention them by way of evidencing your ability to communicate.

Your examples can come from any area of your experience: your course, volunteering, paid employment, internships or placements, university societies or positions of responsibility. Drawing evidence from a variety of sources will demonstrate your adaptability and versatility. Remember, if you are applying for a graduate job or scheme, all the other applicants will also be graduates so if you can draw on experience from outside your course you are more likely to stand out from other candidates. Just make sure that what you write is relevant.

You may choose to structure your examples using the STAR technique (Situation, Task, Action, Result) and can find more information about this in our Applications Guide but be aware that such examples can be quite wordy and may not be appropriate in a personal statement where there is a tight word limit.

You can outline how this role aligns with your personal career plans especially if training is offered or if the role gives you the opportunity to gain professional accreditation. You will need to make sure that your goals are aligned with what the company or organisation is able to offer.

Demonstrate why you want the job and what motivates you to work in this environment, company or organisation. You may wish to refer to aspects of the job that you find attractive, possibly referring to aspects of the training offered or to what you have found out about the company.

## Your conclusion

Make your conclusion meaningful. Finish on a high note not a whimper. Reiterate your enthusiasm and suitability for the role and if possible highlight how you might add value to their organisation. You may like to thank the assessor for their time for reading your personal statement but don't be overly flattering.

## And remember...!

Check, check and check again. Make sure you use spellcheck but don't rely on it. You may be using the wrong word spelled correctly, so get someone to proofread your work. Ask if they can understand what you are trying to say - if they can't, rewrite it. Check your grammar. Make sure the layout is clear and ensure that it is readable. In order to write a good personal statement you need time so try to make sure you have time to re-draft if necessary. It can often help if you can leave it for a while and come back to what you have written with a fresh eye. If stuck, ask for advice either in a careers interview or by attending an Application Drop-in.

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