



# **UF CAREER CONNECTIONS CENTER**

## **Personal Statement Guide**



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## Personal Statement Preparation

### What is the purpose of a personal statement?

- Prepares you for your next steps
- Helps a committee get to know you beyond your test scores and transcript and allows you to highlight your unique strengths and competencies
- Provides a holistic view of who you are
- May be the only “interview” opportunity with the school
- Showcases what makes you different from other candidates and why you are qualified and a good fit for the program Demonstrates your writing ability, self-awareness, and motivations

### What will you be asked?

- **General or Open-Ended Prompt:** Some schools will simply ask for a "personal statement," "letter of intent," a "statement of purpose," or simply state "Tell me about yourself."
  - Narrative style response
  - Allows more freedom of what to include
  - Relates back to why you are pursuing that particular field or program
  - Shows your voice
  - Not just a summary of your resume
- **Specific Topics or Questions:** Some schools may ask multiple specific questions, which may need to be answered in different essays.
  - Answer question(s) fully and stay on topic
  - Consider what they are hoping to learn by asking that question
  - Refer to relevant experiences or learning to support your answer

### Reflection questions to ask yourself before writing:

- What is distinctive about me?
- How can I help the reader get to know me? □ How do I stand out?
- What will make me a great professional one day? □ Why do I want to attend this program? How does it fit into my short and long-term goals?
- What major influences or accomplishments in my life have helped shaped me and what insights have I gained from them?
- How did I become interested in this field and what have I learned about it (and myself) that has stimulated my interest?
- What are some themes in my life experiences as it relates to my interest in the program or the institution I wish to attend?
- What are my motivations, values, and goals? What unique strengths and competencies have I developed?
- How will my personal qualities contribute to the field and program?



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## Parts of the Personal Statement

### Introduction (the hook)

- This section serves as a framework for the rest of the personal statement.
- Use a compelling first statement or a "hook" to grab the reader's attention. This helps the reader to want to keep reading and to feel connected to you.
- Introduce a main idea or theme to use throughout the personal statement.
- Answer these questions: why are you writing this and what do you want?
- Make sure to mention the name of the school and/or program in this section if you are not using a centralized application.

### Body (tell your story):

- Use this section to highlight your competencies, abilities, and experiences that will make you a successful student and professional. Try to stick to 2-3 key stories or experiences.
- Be personal and speak in the first person. Make sure the essay reflects your voice and uses concise, direct language rather than relying on clichés or gimmicks.
- Connect how your story relates to your interest in the program and your values, outlook, and ambitions.
- Can use this space to address gaps or discrepancies in your academic record and put them into context, such as drops in GPA or school performance.
- Personalize your statement for each program you are applying for and address the program or school's unique features that attract you.

### Conclusion (the future):

- Reiterate the theme or focus from your narrative, such as why you've chosen this career goal, what makes this particular program the best next step, and why you are a suitable student for this program.
- Make this a strong, forward-looking paragraph. Anticipate possible experiences you hope to gain in that graduate program as well as in your career.
- Make sure to follow the length guidelines provided, otherwise 1 page (single spaced) to 2 pages (double spaced) is ideal.

## Next Steps

- Proofread! Have at least 2-3 others review your personal statement, including someone who knows you well and a professor or other professional in your field
- Ask others what impressions your personal statement gives. Does it answer the question the prompt(s) ask? Does it relate to why you want to do this particular program?
- Reading your personal statement out loud, to yourself or others, may help clarify if there is cohesion or if anything is vague.
- It is normal to review a personal statement 2-3 times before deciding on a final draft.
- Visit the Career Connections Center and the UF Writing Studio for individual help and workshops on creating a personal statement.

