

Starting Points: Postgraduate Personal Statements

What is a Personal Statement?

This is probably the most important part of the application form; your chance to explain why you should be offered a place on the course and your motivations for choosing it. You can be required to complete a personal statement for all types of postgraduate course including research based ones such as Masters by Research and PhDs. You are sometimes also asked to submit a CV along with your personal statement - see our Starting Points leaflet on CVs for further guidance on this topic.

It is your chance to show how you stand out from other applicants; particularly important if you have chosen a popular course. Course admissions staff are looking to see your enthusiasm, what you can bring to the course in terms of your academic ability and knowledge, personal skills and, for the more vocational courses, relevant work experience.

Before you start to write, think about the following

- Your motivations for choosing this course and undertaking further study - you may find it helpful to read our Starting Points leaflet on Postgraduate Study and to talk through your ideas first with an Adviser
- What you can bring to the course in terms of relevant personal and technical skills such as IT, experience, academic ability and knowledge?
- Think about how you can evidence all the above too - you can draw upon examples from your current course, particular modules for example, paid and unpaid work experience and outside interests?
- Include reasons for choosing that particular institution - it could be their academic reputation, employability success rate, you are familiar with it
- Also consider how the course fits in with your longer term career goals

Writing your personal statement

- Once you have considered what you need to include in your personal statement you need to gather detailed information on the course. See course prospectuses, go along to open days and/or arrange meetings to find out more from course staff
- You need to write in a professional way, sometimes to strict word limits, avoiding casual/text speak with perfect grammar and punctuation
- A range of resources to develop writing skills is available through the [Skills Centre](#) at Sheffield Hallam
- Have a look at some examples of personal statements - ask in your Department and also at the Student and Graduate Employability Service

Further tips

- Give yourself plenty of time to complete your application - there may be early deadlines for some courses
- Produce a draft copy in another document such as Microsoft Word - copy and paste the

finished one into your application

- Answer any questions fully and provide evidence for each of your points
- Tailor each application to the course you are applying for - every course is different in some way, even courses with the same title so you need to reflect this in your statement
- Get someone to give you constructive feedback - Employability Advisors are happy to do this and you can also approach your course tutors
- Check for grammatical errors and spelling mistakes
- Keep a copy of your personal statement - this will help you prepare for interviews

Additional information for postgraduate research applications

- You may also have to submit a research proposal if you are applying for either a Masters by Research or Doctoral programme such as a PhD
- You may be applying to an existing project, common for science and more technical subject areas, or presenting your own idea for research
- For your own research idea you need to include the following: project title, proposed research area, methodology and references
- If you are responding to an existing project you need to treat this a little bit like you would a job application, reading the requirements of the 'post' and presenting evidence of your suitability, including motivation for that particular subject
- You are strongly advised to gain feedback from an academic in your department before you submit an application for a research based course
- You may also find it helpful to use the guidelines on the findaphd.com website

Want to talk it through?

Contact Careers and Employability Service for further advice and support via careers@shu.ac.uk or 0114 225 3752. This information is available in alternative formats on request.