

Personal Statement Student Guide: Masters Study

Planning your Personal Statement

A personal statement is a supporting document, submitted along with your application for further academic study, that outlines your eligibility and academic interest in undertaking a Masters programme. Your aim, within your personal statement, should be to inform the university why you want to study the course you are applying for, how this particular programme fits into your future professional plans and to demonstrate your ability to successfully complete the course.

Questions to address in your application:

- Why do you want to study this Masters programme, in particular, and how will it benefit you?
- How does the course fit your skill set?
- What unique and interesting experience, such work experience or volunteering, can you offer?
- What are your future career aspirations?
- How will your experiences contribute to the course you are applying for?

If you are applying for a course in a different field from your undergraduate study, you may wish to additionally consider the following questions:

- Why have you chosen a different field of study?
- How will you bring new perspectives and insights to the course from your undergraduate degree?
- How this will help you to achieve your career aspirations?

So, where do you begin?

- Research the course you are applying for. Each university will provide key information about each of their courses. Carefully read this information and use this to inform the content of your application.
- No two universities are the same, so don't forget to tailor your application. If you are applying for more than one course or institution, do not send the same personal statement.

Structure

A well-structured personal statement can be really impactful so aim to structure your personal statement so that each paragraph and sentence logically follows on from the one before, building to a strong conclusion.

Dos and Don'ts

- **Do** – Introduce your personal statement with a brief summary of who you are, your interest in your chosen field of study and some key skills and experiences which you can expand on in your following paragraphs.
- **Do** – Pay attention to the word count, and plan your structure accordingly. These will vary from university to university, but always ensure that your sentences are clear, concise and to the point.
- **Do** – Use a sentence structure where you make a claim and back up this claim with evidence. Do this by discussing and making connections between your work experience, academic interests, key skills and how useful this will be to the course you are applying for.
- **Do** – Provide a strong conclusion that sums up your main points and shows a clear passion and enthusiasm for the subject.
- **Don't** – Separate your skills, experience and academic interests into separate sections. This is very useful for the planning stage of your application, but ensure you make explicit connections between these when writing so that your application flows.
- **Don't** – Provide a deeply personal account or 'life story' of the reasons for your passion in this subject. Avoid statements such as "I have always loved..." as these are vague and usually exaggerated!
- **Don't** – Trail off and finish without a conclusive statement. If you are running out of words, one or two summarising sentences should be enough.

Content

Your personal statement should demonstrate your skills, enthusiasm and motivations for studying this course.

Dos and Don'ts

- **Do** – Give strong reasons as to why you want to study this specific course at this specific university, such as the way the course is organised, or modules that particularly interest you.
- **Do** – Mention relevant study, including projects, dissertations, essays or work experience, and make a connection between these and the modules/skills required on your postgraduate course.
- **Do** – Provide evidence of your key skills including, research, critical thinking, communication, organisation, planning and time-management and show how these will be a positive contribution to the department.

- **Don't** – Forget to highlight career aspirations and show how the course will help you achieve them.

Language

Your tone should be positive and enthusiastic. It should demonstrate an enthusiasm for the course and persuade the reader you have what it takes to succeed on this course.

Dos and Don'ts

- **Do** – Maintain a professional and enthusiastic tone through your language.
- **Do** – Use clear and concise language
- **Do** – Use accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- **Do** – Proofread your statement more than once and ask someone else to proofread it for you.

- **Don't** – Make extravagant claims or bend the truth in any way – this will show!
- **Don't** – Be vague. Always be specific and explicit in your language in all of your content.

For further advice on postgraduate study and making applications, please contact a member of the Careers, Placements and Student Opportunities team on careers@yorks.ac.uk