**Introduction**

If you apply to study medicine as a graduate student you will go through the same UCAS application process as any other student. UCAS (the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service) provides a single, online application form for you to complete, and this includes a personal statement.

The personal statement is your opportunity to demonstrate that you have the motivation for studying medicine as well a realistic understanding of what the course (and career) entails, and the necessary skills and qualities required to be successful.

**Some key themes**

Your personal statement must provide the evidence for the non-academic criteria and should include:

- Why do you want to become a doctor?
- Why now?
- What do you understand about the role of a doctor in a modern healthcare service?
- How have you confirmed that you would be suitable to this career?
- How would you demonstrate that you have the right interpersonal skills?
- What have you learnt from previous experiences – about yourself, about the NHS, about the role of a doctor etc?

The themes discussed below are not an exhaustive list of topics to include in your personal statement, but are designed to give you some ideas and suggestions on how to structure your own statement.

**Why do you want to be a doctor?**

These need to be convincing reasons that explain your decision to become a doctor. Who or what was inspirational or influential in your decision? Wanting to ‘help people’ will not be enough, because there are careers which would enable you to help people. It is important to go beyond the obvious explanations and be specific about what aspects of the role of a doctor appeal to you. Take a look at some of the common responses below and see how they might be interpreted by an admissions tutor:

- ‘I am good at science and want to help people’ - *So why not become a physiotherapist?*
- ‘I regularly read New Scientist’ - *Don’t we all! What does this indicate about your capacity to become a doctor, other than a general interest in science?*
- ‘I shadowed a cardiothoracic surgeon’ - *So? What did you learn from this experience?*
- ‘I want to make a difference’ - *So start smiling more!*

**Why now?**

Remember that there is no automatic reason why you should study medicine straight after doing a first degree, although it certainly makes sense in terms of building on your existing knowledge. People apply to study medicine from a wide range of occupations and ages, so try to be specific about why you think this is the right time for you and justify why you think you deserve a place on a medical course.

**Work shadowing / observation**

You should ideally have undertaken some shadowing or observation of a doctor. This will demonstrate that you have a realistic view of a career in medicine. Again, specify what you did, for how long and more importantly, what you learned from the experience. This could include:

- Current issues affecting the medical profession.
- What you learnt about the role of a doctor.
- What you learnt about a modern healthcare service.

Be careful not to make your statement one long list of different work experiences that you have had. From an admissions tutor’s perspective it is not important how many work experience opportunities you have arranged, but rather what you have learnt from them.

**Paid / voluntary work**

It is essential to have some relevant work experience to show your ability to work with a wide cross section of the community. Without this you are unlikely to be successful. This could include voluntary work at a hospice, working in a care home, or involvement with disabled, homeless, elderly or vulnerable people.

In this section you might outline:

- What responsibilities you had
- What skills you learnt / developed
- What you learned about yourself
- How you felt about what you did
- What you found challenging
- What you found rewarding
- What you learnt about working with others in a team?
You can also include non-relevant work but try to emphasise the transferable skills.

**Community Activities**

You could consider including some information on how you have contributed to society in some way. This could include raising money for charity, involvement with causes or projects, mentoring schoolchildren etc. Again be careful not to assume that simply by describing these experiences you will gain credit for them; you must describe what you have learnt from the experiences and what transferable skills you think you have gained relevant to medicine.

**General activities and interests**

This section is designed to demonstrate that you are a well-rounded person and that you have interests outside academic studies. This could include sports or musical achievements, membership to clubs or societies, hobbies or interests. Try to highlight evidence and examples of

- Teamwork
- Positions of responsibility
- Specific achievements
- The ability to balance study with other activities (indicating time-management and organisation)

**In summary: why should you be offered a place?**

The final paragraph is your chance to really sell yourself. Identify the qualities that make you unique, that will make you stand out from all the other candidates. If you are unsure, ask friends and family what makes you unique.

**Structure and Style**

Imagine being an admissions tutor. You may have to read several hundred personal statements from candidates interested in your medical course. You will probably be looking out for statements that are clearly organised, easy to read, and insightful. What you will not want to read is several hundred descriptions of very similar work experiences and university clubs and societies.

Try to organise your statement into themes. So, for example, you might want to start with an introduction to why you want to study medicine. You could then try to provide structured paragraphs to illustrate that you have the skills and knowledge required to be a successful medical student, such as:

- Scientific knowledge and skills (gained from previous education)
- An awareness of the role of a doctor and how it is changing (gained from work experience or talking to people)
- Interpersonal skills
- Study skills and independence of thought
- Time-management and commitment

Finally, remember that whoever reads your statement will not know you and so you should never assume that they will be able to infer things from what you say. It is up to you to be very explicit about the knowledge, skills and qualities that you have developed, and to provide evidence to back up any claims that you make.

**Some Do's and Don'ts**

**DO**

- Be genuine about what really interests you about medicine
- Try to structure your statement according to themes
- Be honest (you don’t want to get caught out at interview!)
- Proof read and check for spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Ensure it is legible

**DON'T**

- Simply ‘update’ a previous statement you may have used in the past
- Mention any subject you can’t talk about at interview
- Hero-worship doctors or try to over impress
- Use out of date examples
- Use words you can’t pronounce at interview
- Try to be humorous
- Focus on the rewards of being a doctor

**Word Count**

UCAS guidelines state 4000 characters or 47 lines of text which is about 550 words.