

Writing personal statements for teacher training applications

A personal statement is a piece of writing that you will be asked to submit as part of your application for teacher training.

You will usually need to write a statement for a PGCE course, School Direct or training courses that ask for applications via UCAS.

Your personal statement should demonstrate that you have:

- relevant skills
- physical stamina
- relevant work experience
- strong commitment
- relevant background knowledge
- realistic aspirations
- sufficient motivation/desire
- suitable personal qualities/values
- required intellectual capacity.



What do I need to include?

A personal statement for teacher training needs to be well-structured and include the following:

- an introductory paragraph stating why you want to be a teacher and why you feel you are suited to the profession
- details about your relevant work experience, including your reflections, opinions, self-development and observations
- why you want to work with the age group/subject specified by the course
- any additional factors that support your application
- a concluding paragraph summarising your statement.

Why you and why teaching?

In your opening paragraph you need to say why you are applying for teacher training and why you think you would make a good teacher.

Begin your statement with an opening sentence that avoids general and clichéd phrases e.g. 'I have always wanted to teach' and 'I believe teaching is very worthwhile'.

Concentrate on what has influenced your decision to teach, how the idea has developed, and what you have to offer in terms of skills and attributes.

Why you?

To help you think about why you would make a good teacher, write a list with your skills and personal qualities, how you can demonstrate them, and how they illustrate that you have potential.

Why teaching?

- What was the trigger point?
- How did the idea develop?
- What has shaped your thinking?
- What did you do to find out more/develop appropriate skills?

- Have certain people influenced you?
- Communicate your enthusiasm
- Convey your desire to work with young people (backed with evidence)

Your relevant experience

In this section you need to mention your relevant experience. This could be work experience in a school or other work with children and young people. You only need to write about experience you have gained in the last three years.

Working or volunteering in a school

- What did you do?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- How did the experience develop/influence you?
- What did you achieve?
- What age groups did you experience?
- What techniques did you observe; effective and not so effective, and why?

Other work experience

Writing about other experience with young people will also support your application. This could include working in a youth group, after-school club, summer camp, etc.

Even if your work experience doesn't include working with young people, it can still be worth mentioning if it demonstrates useful skills.

The age group you want to teach and why

This section should do more than just say what area of teaching you want to work in. It is another opportunity to show that you have carefully researched your options.

You can also use it to relate your application to your relevant skills.

- Draw on relevant work experience i.e. what you have observed and match this with your skills and preferences
- Refer to any research you have done into the Key Stages

- Explain why you have targeted this particular type of course e.g. for flexibility, reputation, Key Stage
- Add additional skills/factors that have influenced your choice

Additional factors

This section is an opportunity to mention other qualities you have that can support your application.

This can include:

- academic qualifications, such as A Levels or short courses
- extra skills and interests, such as language, art, music, etc. (These can be useful for after-school clubs)
- why you chose this course
- any further work experience that you have planned
- how your degree course relates to what you want to teach.

Concluding paragraph

This paragraph sums up your statement. You can use it to reinforce your commitment to teaching, and to show that you understand what will be required of you during the course.

You may also want to show that you have researched teaching as a profession and have good reasons for choosing this method of study.

Tips for writing your personal statement

- Avoid overusing short sentences beginning with 'I'. Rather than phrases like: I feel, I think, I believe, etc. Use a range of positive action words. For example: planned, managed, implemented, organised.
- Avoid using statements that are overly general, e.g. 'it was rewarding'. Qualify these statements by saying what you learned, what you enjoyed, what skills you gained etc.
- Avoid only using babysitting or helping younger siblings with their reading as examples of relevant experience.

- Think about not just what you say, but how. Extra detail can help you demonstrate why your experiences matter.

Other resources

- Apply for a UCAS Teacher Training programme: ucas.com/apply/teacher-training
- Our teaching sector guide with information on training and application tips: <http://guides.careers.sussex.ac.uk/teaching>
- Sussex Department of Education's initial teacher training: www.sussex.ac.uk/education