Preparing and writing a personal statement for teaching

The key to a successful personal statement is to clearly demonstrate your motivation, skills and personal qualities to become an inspiring and valued teacher.

Getting started – some top tips

- You are writing a persuasive, confident statement – not an essay. Choose your words carefully to maximise the impact of your statement to secure an interview.
- Give yourself plenty of time to complete the personal statement as this is the crucial part of the application form.
- You are given 47 lines (4,000 characters) to write your personal statement.
- Draft your personal statement in Word so you can check spelling and grammar. You can then copy and paste this into your online application.
- You need two referees; one academic tutor and another person who knows you well. This could be an employer or a teacher from a school at which you volunteered. Ask your referees well in advance of the deadline and give them a copy of your statement so they can write their reference in context.

What do the providers look for?

Here are three comments from local ITT providers:

“Excitement – we see a lot of rather formulaic applications, so show your passion for your subject, and make your statement stand out.”

“Anecdotal aspects to make it more personal, to say why you’ve got a love of teaching, and make your statement stand out!”

What should your statement include?

Introductory paragraphs

- Be specific about why you want to teach. Your opening sentence should avoid platitudes like “I’ve always wanted to teach...”
- Demonstrate convincingly that you have the necessary motivation, commitment, realism, personal qualities and values for a career in teaching
- Focus on what has influenced your decision to teach, and how this aspiration matured. What can you offer to teaching?
- Consider your personal qualities, values and skills (with supporting evidence) that demonstrate you have the potential to be a good teacher
- Communicate enthusiastically why you want to teach. Where did your ideas start? How did it develop? What has influenced you? Show that you have become better informed about teaching. What evidence demonstrates your desire to work with young people?

Relevance of your work experience

- School-based experience – what did you do, with which key stage? What did you achieve? What did you learn from observing teachers? How did the experience develop you? What did you learn about yourself? What is effective and why?
- Other work with young people – paid or voluntary, for example mentoring and after-school clubs
- For other types of work experience, consider how it can provide evidence of relevant skills and qualities. For example, customer service experience can demonstrate your communication skills, patience and diplomacy. Remember, teachers work with other professionals and parents

Explain your choice of age group and/or subject area

- Match your work experience, skills and preferences to the age group you want to teach
- Demonstrate your knowledge of changes to the curriculum
- Explain why you are you applying for this route into teaching (flexibility and key stage)?
- Is your subject a national curriculum one? If it is a joint honours degree, indicate what percentage of the subject you want to teach, you have actually studied

Additional factors

Talk about your national curriculum A level subjects; any additional courses, for example IT or languages; and any other skills you have developed in areas such as sport, music, art, drama and language. Also outline any further work experience you have planned.
Concluding paragraph
Provide a strong ending summarising your commitment and suitability to the course.

Dos and don’ts

Do...
• aim to be enthusiastic, persuasive and interesting
• mention young people – it is as much about enabling them to learn as you wanting to teach
• be reflective, not just descriptive when writing about your classroom experience

Don’t...
• overuse short sentences, all beginning with “I...”
• use general statements and narrative such as “I feel” or “I believe”. Try to use a range of positive action words, such as planned, managed, implemented and organised
• make a statement without qualifying it with evidence of how it affected you, for example, “It was rewarding”

How we can help
We can offer feedback on your personal statement and help you prepare for an interview.

nottingham.ac.uk/careers/appointments

You may also want to attend our events: Applying for teaching skills workshop and the Spotlight On: Teaching session.

nottingham.ac.uk/careers/events

Next steps
If a selector is impressed with your application, you will be invited to an interview. This will also include other tasks such as a presentation, group discussion and written tests.

Next steps
UCAS
Information on applying and finance options.
ucas.com/ucas/teacher-training/ucas-teachertraining-apply-and-track

Get into Teaching
Find out about routes into teaching, funding, applying, events and gaining school experience.
getintoteaching.education.gov.uk

National Curriculum
Get an overview of the national curriculum and key stages.
gov.uk/national-curriculum/overview

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