

Your Personal Statement

Your personal statement is the opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have the enthusiasm and aptitude required to be a successful student and dental practitioner. It's a short document, and you'll be submitting the same version to every Dental School, so it's important that you think about it before you write and balance each school's requirements carefully. This document will tell you what we look for at Leeds. Most Dental Schools are looking for evidence of the same attributes, but you should also read the guidance provided by any other school to which you are applying (just in case they have something slightly different).

General principles

The personal statement tells us about you. Make the statement as specific and personal as you can. Whenever possible only make claims which can be verified, and do show us what your experiences mean to you. Don't take up space telling us things we already know, such as your academic results or the subjects you are taking; the personal statement box doesn't have a lot of space to spare!

Values Based Recruitment

The School of Dentistry aligns its selection and recruitment process to the NHS Constitution's Values Based Recruitment:

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/recruitingforvalues>

We agree that the following 6 x Cs are important values for you to be selected on:

**Care, Compassion, Competence,
Communication, Courage and Commitment**

Be careful with...

Your spelling and grammar. Accurate spelling and grammar are of paramount importance. You have plenty of time to prepare and perfect your statement before submission, so any errors which slip through make it look as if you haven't taken much care over it. This doesn't look attractive to an Admissions Team. Don't forget to use paragraphs; it is very difficult to read a huge block of text.

Be especially careful to avoid plagiarism i.e. the words must be your own. There are two important reasons for this. Firstly, a personal statement must be personal, i.e. it must be about you and written by you. A plagiarised statement only tells us about someone else. Secondly, plagiarism (presenting the work of another person as your own) is a form of dishonesty, something

we do not regard as an attractive quality in applicants. UCAS puts all applications through similarity detection tests, which identify statements that have been copied from another source. Don't be tempted to copy another person's application materials, or download your personal statement from a website. We may reject any such application immediately.

Other sources of Information:

UCAS

There are many sources of information to help you to write your personal statement. The UCAS site contains a lot of useful information but bear in mind that it is generic information, intended for applicants to all courses. However, you should also try to tailor your personal statement to highlight information of interest to Dental Schools. See

<http://wwwucas.com/students/applying/howtoapply/personalstatement/> for further guidance.

University open days

The University of Leeds offers a 'Top Tips' personal statement talk during the University open days, but this is a generic talk aimed at all programmes across the University so be sure to read the guidance below or to attend the personal statement workshop at the School of Dentistry. See here for more information about the open days:

http://www.leeds.ac.uk/info/30335/open_days

Social Media

There are also many internet forums and chat rooms populated by current and prior Dental School applicants, all willing to offer advice. These are good places for discussions, but be wary of any sweeping statements which you encounter. The contributors to these discussions may have limited experience on which to base their opinions and a lot of things "everybody knows" turn out not to be true. No Dental School issues misleading information and we are as open as we can be without risking the integrity of the applications process – rather like an exam board who will tell you the syllabus, but not which actual questions will be in this year's A-level papers.

Finally, there are alternative entry routes:

The University of Leeds is committed to improving access to all our courses, including dentistry, via a range of Widening Access and Foundation programmes. You can find out about Access to Leeds at www.leeds.ac.uk/accesstoleeds and more about the Foundation Year programme at <http://www.llc.leeds.ac.uk/courses/interdisciplinary-science-foundation>

So what do we want to see on your personal statement?

Your motivation and insight into a career as a dental practitioner

However you have arrived at the decision that your calling is to be dental professional, make sure you tell us about your journey and relate it back to your motivation and insight into Dentistry. It is not enough to just state 'I have a passion for dentistry'; you have to reflect on why that is!

At the School of Dentistry we understand that sometimes gaining dental work experience can be tricky, so although it is desirable there are many ways to show your motivation and insight, passion and commitment.

You can demonstrate insight in many different ways. Telling us that you have been to open days or taster classes is good. If you have been successful at finding a dental placement or a care home where they have mobile dentistry for example, or perhaps you recognize the skills that a dental professional should display by visiting your dentist every 6 months for your check-up Signing up for a free MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) that relates to Dentistry would provide great insight for you. However just telling us this in itself will not gain you a place. We want to see that you can identify with the skills gained by those experiences and that you have learnt how to use them in your life.

So, for example, if you have observed team working skills between the dentist, the nurse and the technician, tell us what you have observed then expand on how they work together. Tell us how you have changed the way you work with other people as a result of seeing good evidence of team working skills.



The 6 Cs of Care; Courtesy of NHS England

Evidence of Social and Cultural Awareness

We are looking for individuals who can demonstrate that they can communicate and work with a wide range of people, including those who are vulnerable, or less able to help themselves. Show us how you understand how different people may react to going to the dentist. For example, for some it is something they would never do, even to the point of having tooth decay, but for others, they are there every six months – why?

An understanding of the diversity of the world we live in is one of the key skills a dental professional requires. Think about activities that give you the opportunity to learn about other cultures, and groups. Put yourself in someone else's shoes and give yourself a new perspective on life. Working in a care home, at a community event, in paid or unpaid work and relevant employment, or you might have cared for your siblings or elderly relatives. If you are the one that drops in every week to meet an elderly lonely person and brighten their day, you are exhibiting skills and qualities that we want to see on your personal statement. Working in a shop that serves a wide range of people – all these activities (and so many more) will give you some good grounding in being socially and culturally aware. Through your experience you can demonstrate: empathy, respect for diversity, listening skills, **compassion** and **care**.

Evidence of Life Experience

Everyone should have something to say about their life experience. Regardless of whether you are coming from school, or returning to education after 20 years, you will have some form of life experience. We are not looking for applicants to have done everything by the time they leave school, but we are looking to see if you can identify your life experience to date, regardless of your age or situation. You will have something to talk about in this section that reflects who you are, what you have learnt and how your life experiences will make you a better practitioner.

There are many ways you can demonstrate responsibility, which is a skill that we look for. You might be the Head Girl/Boy, or team captain. Please don't underestimate the fact that you may have held down a job for many months or years because it tells us something about you if an employer is willing to employ you. You must be trustworthy, reliable, punctual and a good worker. It is easy to show how you can take responsibility because you have the opportunity to do this on a regular basis in all aspects of life, through a variety of activities.

So for example, if you have observed a strong work ethic or time management skills, you might discuss how by working at a part time job, you have been able to develop these skills and qualities by having to be punctual and working hard to impress your employer. Then take it one step further and explain how those particular skills will be useful when managing your academic work, your home life, work life balance, your extracurricular activities etc.

Whatever your skill set, use it to demonstrate some key skills and qualities such as determination, time management, resilience, **communication**, **commitment** and **competence**, to evidence your ability to do this course. Whatever you do, don't just talk about your skills – evidence them.

Your Interests, Activities and Achievements

Think about what you like to do in your spare time. Don't just relate it to manual dexterity, we will test that in the MMI if you are invited. We are interested in you, and what you like to do. A wide range of activities tells us that you have good time management skills (particularly if you are keeping your grades high). You can demonstrate lots of qualities such as resilience, and tenacity if it is a particularly difficult activity with many challenges. Maybe it is art or needlework and you have sold pieces of work on eBay or at craft fairs. Everything you do could evidence a skill that a dental professional will need, even the fun stuff! Just think it through and then reflect on what you have learned, and how it will make you a better dental professional.

Reflect on your experiences

Don't be afraid to tell us about your personal weaknesses. We are keen to know if you have faced some challenges in your life and have found a way to overcome them. Even if at the time, you didn't manage them well, the fact that you thought about it, reflected on it and have come up with other ways to deal with the issue is what reflectiveness is all about. That in itself shows you are able to be **courageous**.

When you write your statement, and you are letting us know about your activities and your experience, weave your reflections into the words that you write. What we don't want is blocks covering the headings above. We are interested in you, and are interested to see how you can tell your story of why you are applying for dentistry, what you have done to further your passion and excitement for the subject and then reflect on the skills learnt along the way.

"One of the most challenging situations I faced was when I cared for one of the disabled clients over a weekend for respite care. Expanding the comment by adding on "I was nervous about this task, but prepared for it by seeking guidance from the carer beforehand and reading up about this particular disability" will dramatically enhance your application and make you stand out from your peers.

What now?

This is your chance to tell us about yourself. Grab a pencil and a sheet of a paper. Or turn on your computer and start a new document, if that's how you like to work. Or pick up a pack of Post-It notes and find a blank wall. We can't decide what will work for you, because we don't know you.

Use your academic referee

Your academic reference is important. If you can, encourage them to enhance your activities by talking about them in more depth. Prime your referee with information unique to you that you have not had space to include in your personal statement. We read your reference too! If your referee concentrates only on information about your academic results and not your underlying skills and personal characteristics, we are not learning much new about you as we have access to your results already. If you have had experiences that have interrupted your education then ask your referee to tell us more about it. We can't guarantee to take it into account but if it is not there, we won't have the opportunity to do so.

Final thoughts...

Please make sure you have listed any resits that you might be taking – if you don't meet the predicted grades at first view, and then your application might automatically be made unsuccessful. We can only consider the information that you provide at the time, and not retrospectively, so please take care of how you complete the form.

Good Luck!

This guide has been prepared to assist students applying in 2015/16 for admission to the course in September 2016. While School policy usually remains broadly unchanged from year to year, you should NOT assume that any details contained in this guide will necessarily apply to later years. If you are considering applying, you should always make sure you have the current version of all documents. These will be always be available on our website

http://medhealth.leeds.ac.uk/info/1200/school_of_dentistry

External Web Addresses

The School of Dentistry has no control over website content outside the domain www.leeds.ac.uk/dentistry. All URLs used in this document were checked prior to printing but may since have changed.

Credit

Many thanks go to the School of Medicine at the University of Leeds for allowing us to adapt and use their guide to reproduce for use in the School of Dentistry.

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