

Advice and Tips on Personal Statements for Teacher Training Applications (PGDE/CE)

What is the personal statement?

- The personal statement is a short piece of writing (47 lines) which you are asked to submit in support of your application. It is your opportunity to demonstrate your skills, experience and motivation for teaching.

Before you start:

- Remember that this is a very important part of your application. The personal statement and your reference will be the main factors in the selectors' decision, once you have met the entry requirements.
- Take your time to carefully plan out and practise your statement. It is a good idea to draft your statement in a word processed document and get some feedback on it before committing to the final version.
- You can save and return to your statement as often as you like, so remember to make a note of your username and password.

Questions to consider when structuring your Personal Statement:

- Why do you want to be a teacher? - What has inspired you; who/what influenced you?
- Why do you want to work with young people? - What appeals to you about working with this age group; what skills do you possess that will help you?
- Why do you want to teach your subject? - For primary: demonstrate a breadth of knowledge across a range of curriculum areas. For secondary: show how your subject knowledge is relevant to the curriculum.
- What have you gained from working with young people? - Have you had any experience in schools or working with children in other settings? Reflect upon what you did, what you observed and what you learned.
- What else can you offer? E.g. skills in sports, music, languages, arts & crafts, ICT etc.

Top Tips:

- Don't waste space with irrelevant or repetitive information. Be succinct and avoid complicated language and overly long sentences.
- If 'cutting and pasting' from a word processing programme, carefully check the formatting.
- Be specific about what you have to offer. Detail what you have gained from your experiences in schools and working with children. Give appropriate evidence of the skills you possess for teaching.
- Indicate the relevance of any other types of experience or skills you possess, e.g. working with people, sports or languages etc.
- Avoid using negative language. Present any gaps in skills or experience positively.
- Check grammar and spelling thoroughly! Do not rely on the spelling and grammar check on your word processing package alone. Ask someone to proof read it for you.
- Finish with a summary of what you have to offer – leave the selectors with a clear understanding of your suitability for the course.

- Let your enthusiasm for teaching and working with children shine through in everything you say.

Example Personal Statement for PGDE Applications

Below is an example of a 'typical' personal statement. There is considerable room for improvement and the attached notes make suggestions for enhancement.

This statement is far too short: you are allowed 47 lines – use them!

Remember to specify whether you are applying for the primary or secondary course.

When describing experience with children, make sure you are specific about what you learned from the work and the skills you developed.

I am applying for the PGDE course because I have always wanted to be a teacher. I really like working with children and think that I have the right kinds of skills to become a good teacher.

It is not enough to say you have developed the "right kinds of skills". Be specific about the skills you have developed.

At school I was involved with the Primary 1 class when I was in final year. I helped the less able children with reading on a one to one basis. I also help out at my local Brownie pack every week, keeping the girls busy with various activities. I have applied to do the Student Tutoring Scheme through my University at a local school but haven't heard whether I have got a place yet.

It is important to have a strong opening statement – it is the first thing the selectors will read so you want to make an impact. Avoid clichéd phrases such as "I love children" or "I have always wanted to teach". Think about *why* you have always wanted to teach and clearly demonstrate your motivation.

When describing your studies, remember to show how this is relevant to the subject(s) you will be teaching.

You need to demonstrate (by providing evidence) that you have developed/ have the potential to develop skills such as communication, leadership, teamwork, problem solving, organisation, planning and time management.

At school I studied a wide range of subjects but the one I enjoyed most was History so that is what I have studied at university. I also took Sociology and Politics in first year and Politics in second year too.

Explain what you hope to gain from the course.

I have been a babysitter for two children for several years and enjoy helping the older child with his homework now that he is at school.

I am very interested in education generally and keep up to date with current issues by reading the newspapers.

I would love to study for the PGDE course and have a career in teaching.

It is not enough to say that you 'keep up to date' here. Give some details of a recent educational issue you have found interesting.

The final paragraph should end positively, giving a summary of what you have to offer and stating why you should be offered a place on the course.