

Healthcare and Veterinary UCAS Personal Statements

Healthcare and Veterinary courses are amongst the most competitive courses at any university and the personal statement can make the difference between the successful and unsuccessful candidate, irrespective of their predicted grades for A Level and Level 3 Applied courses. A well-written personal statement will not, in isolation, secure an interview or an offer as it will form part of the overall entry requirement criteria for the course. However, it is likely to form the basis for discussion at interview and will enable admissions tutors to differentiate between students with the same academic profile.

As for all undergraduate courses, your personal statement should refer to your **Motivation** for studying the course and your **Other Interests**. However, the main focus needs to be on the critical evaluation of what you have done to learn about the course/career through work experience and volunteering – your **Career Exploration and Suitability**.

Before you begin writing, a top tip is to list the key skills and attributes of a healthcare or veterinary professional to ensure that you address these in your draft:

- Teamwork and communication skills
- Leadership and responsibility
- Service to the community and society
- Initiative, energy and enthusiasm
- Empathy, patience and respect
- Time management and prioritising
- Risk management, problem-solving skills and the ability to deal with uncertainty

Your Motivation

You may have had a revelatory moment in your past or a lifelong desire to study the course but honesty and a degree of introspection can make for a powerful opening for a personal statement. Your enthusiasm for the course must also 'sing out'; you are not just applying for a course, you are applying for a **vocation** and a **commitment to life-long and self-directed learning**.

Your Career Exploration and Suitability

In addition to high academic achievement, universities look for applicants that can demonstrate an understanding of what a career in their chosen area involves and their suitability for a **high-pressured and demanding profession**. Applicants usually draw on relevant work experience, either paid or voluntary, in health, dentistry and veterinary science or related areas undertaken to demonstrate this understanding.

Whilst the NHS is tackling COVID-19 and social distancing measures are in place, work experience programmes and placements for healthcare and veterinary medicine are not available, particularly in clinical settings. However, there are other things that you can do to support future applications:

www.themedicportal.com/blog/covid-19-the-best-work-experience-alternatives/
www.medschools.ac.uk/media/2636/guidance-on-gaining-relevant-experience-for-studying-medicine-in-the-time-of-covid-19.pdf
www.rcgp.org.uk/training-exams/discover-general-practice/observe-gp.aspx
www.rvc.ac.uk/about/coronavirus/faq-2
www.futurelearn.com/search?q=free+healthcare+courses

If you were fortunate enough to secure participatory, 'hands-on' work experience in a clinical setting such as a hospital, dental surgery or veterinary practice prior to the COVID-19 lockdown you need to reflect on what you learnt from this experience in your personal statement. However, universities recognise that this is not easy to secure. As a result, any observational experience, plus practical experience in alternative settings which you organised, again, prior to the Covid-19 lockdown, can be equally valuable evidence. Examples of relevant work experience could involve:

- A residential care home, hospice or similar
- Working with young children or in a youth group/centre
- Participating in community volunteering schemes
- Helping in a stables/kennels/farm
- Shadowing a GP/Dentist/Vet or other medical practitioner

Nb. Ensure you understand the work experience requirement set by each university for their course.

For all types of work experience however, include examples of:

- Patient histories and examinations
- Diagnostics tests, such as scans or blood tests
- Decisions about a course of treatment and any ethical issues raised
- Procedures you observed – the correct use of clinical terminology is important
- Technology used – an awareness of advances in modern medicine and science
- Multi-disciplinary collaborations and the role of other professionals across teams
- An awareness of current issues facing the NHS/Dental/Veterinary practices
- Similarities and differences between NHS and private practice
- Experience of working with a diverse range of people
- The demonstration of the core industry values

Remember... more important than the experience itself is the ability to demonstrate an understanding of the relevant skills and attributes the profession requires by reflecting upon and the experience you may have had and the insights they have afforded you. **Be selective and analytical** - record your key learning outcomes from each activity and rank them in order of importance to help you structure your personal statement effectively.

The demonstration of wider reading and a keen academic interest are also an important part of your personal statement to reinforce your commitment to a career of continual learning. Whilst it is not absolutely necessary to write about your A Level subjects as admission tutors are experts on the content of these, reference to particular areas of study that you have found fascinating can convey enthusiasm and a **curiosity in the sciences**. This can be even more powerful if linked back to your work experience.

Your Other Interests

Although the bulk of your personal statement should be focused on the critical evaluation of your work experience and voluntary work it is important to evidence a life outside of study. Part-time employment, hobbies and involvement in clubs demonstrates wider interests and can be used to further reinforce your team work and communication skills together with your capacity for sustained, intense work. These can also highlight your appreciation of a **good work/life balance** and an ability to manage your time effectively.

Remember... quality is more important than quantity and further examples can be included in the reference written by your Senior Tutor if necessary.

Essential Reading

www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/good-medical-practice/duties-of-a-doctor

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-nhs/nhs-constitution

www.medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/applications/resources-for-students-and-teachers

www.futurelearn.com/partners/kings-fund

www.dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk/studying-dentistry

www.gdc-uk.org

www.animalowners.rcvs.org.uk/veterinary-careers/I-want-to-be-a-vet

www.bva.co.uk/your-career/becoming-a-vet

Please contact the Careers Department at careersstaff@staidans.co.uk if you would like individual information, advice and guidance on drafting your personal statement – we are happy to help.

Careers Department, St. Aidan's and St John Fisher Associated Sixth Form, April 2020