

## **Introduction: Definition and Purpose of the Narrative/Personal Statement Essay & Using this Guide**

**What it is (From the AAMC's Anatomy of an Applicant Guide):** The personal statement on the AMCAS application is your opportunity to communicate your motivation for a career in medicine and to distinguish yourself from other applicants.

**What it communicates:** This is your best opportunity to tell the medical school admissions officers something about yourself that they wouldn't necessarily learn by looking at the other parts of your application.

**Notes:** Secondary application essay prompts often provide applicants with opportunities to discuss/address the following: meaningful experiences, how your interests align with a school's mission, your desire to serve in a particular community or to work with a particular patient population, or any challenges or obstacles you've faced, including distance traveled. Distance traveled is how admissions officers and pre-health advisors refer to those life challenges you've faced and conquered.

### **Technical Considerations (From the AMCAS Applicant Guide):**

You are required to submit an essay in the Personal Comments Essay section. You must complete two additional essays if you apply to an MD-PhD program: the MD-PhD Essay and the Significant Research Experience Essay. You also need to enter your total hours of research experience.

### **Formatting Your Essay**

Medical schools receive all text entry responses as plain text. Therefore, formatting options such as bulleted lists, indented paragraphs, and bold/italic fonts do not appear for reviewers and are not available in the AMCAS application. You may want to include an extra space between paragraphs because the essay does not permit indentation.

To avoid formatting issues, we recommend that you type your essay directly into your AMCAS application; copying formatted text into the application may result in formatting problems that cannot be edited after your application is submitted. If you do cut and paste your essay(s) into the application, you should draft your essay(s) in a plain text format, such as Microsoft Notepad or Mac TextEdit.

*Please keep the following in mind:*

- Proofread carefully! No changes (including corrections to grammatical or typographical errors) may be made after you submit your application to AMCAS.
- You cannot run a spell check in the AMCAS application, but most browsers have built-in spell checking that you may enable. Use English (United States) characters; other characters may not be accurately recognized.
- Medical schools prefer to receive applications that follow normal writing practices regarding case. You should avoid use of all uppercase or all lowercase letters for the text responses in your application.
- Plagiarism or misrepresentations will prompt an investigation.

- ***It is not necessary to repeat information reported elsewhere on your application.***
- The essay will be sent to all the medical schools to which you have applied.
- The space allotted for the essay is 5,300 characters, or approximately one page. Spaces are counted as characters. You will receive an error message if you exceed the space limit.

### **How to use this Guide**

This guide is intended to assist any UCSB pre-health students who are interested in drafting a personal statement for professional school, whether they plan to apply in the upcoming cycle or some time down the road still. While our pre-health advisors are more than willing and able to review personal statements for students plan to apply in the upcoming cycle, due to the limited appointment availability and time it takes to adequately provide feedback, we ask that students only submit what they strongly feel is the final draft of their personal statement to us. We encourage pre-health students to utilize peers, mentors, and faculty members they draft and revise the personal statement. Our advisors will focus primarily on the content of the personal statement and not on grammar and punctuation issues; although, we will point out to students if we see numerous errors throughout the essay.

Please review these notes on the following videos and worksheets prior to beginning this task.

**1. *Health Professions Career Resources***

Utilize the various resources available to you to help you to learn about your profession and to seek out opportunities to help you develop the characteristics and knowledge necessary to be a good healthcare provider. This normally takes several years.

**2. *Personal Statement Brainstorming, Personal Statement Prep, and Identifying Personal Characteristics***

Utilize these documents to gather and analyze information about yourself, including your personal background, experiences, and motivation for pursuing a career in healthcare. Writing doesn't start until you've done this.

**3. *Narrative/Personal Statement Essay Outline***

Developing an outline, to include a thesis statement and working topic sentences for each of your body paragraphs is very important step in the writing process. Some may choose to free write then go back to develop their outline, while others may start by creating the outline. Whichever order you choose, an outline helps to ensure your essay is unified and flows seamlessly from one topic to the next.

**4. *Ten Steps to Writing the Personal Statement, Structure for Narrative/Personal Statement Essay, Personal Statement Tip Sheet***

These additional resources will help you as draft and revise your personal statement.