

The Writing Center @ KUMC

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The Personal Statement for Fellowship

In your journey to complete your medical education you've written personal statements, first when you applied to medical school and then for residency. Now you're applying for a fellowship, so once again you'll need to write about yourself. This time, however, keep in mind that while the structure of the fellowship personal statement shares similarities with that for residency, there are differences as well. In both the residency and fellowship statements you'll need to describe the specific path and reasons that have led you to your chosen specialty or sub-specialty, as well as what you plan to achieve in your career. But the fellowship personal statement must take this a step further. In your fellowship statement, remember to present yourself as a focused and mature professional with a clear vision of yourself in your chosen area.

Differences from the Residency Personal Statement

The Introduction

Unlike the personal statement for residency, when writing the introduction for your personal statement for fellowship don't spend too many words describing your path to choosing medicine or your specialty. Unless, for example, you have a special experience such as a relative with a disease that motivated you to devote years to studying the genetics of the disease. If something like this is the case, then tell the story. But if your realization isn't unique, don't dwell on this part. Don't forget to mention the subspecialty you're applying for in the first paragraph, and ideally in the first sentence.

Body Paragraphs

The body of your fellowship personal statement, which comprises two or three paragraphs, also differs from the residency personal statement. Instead of tracing your growing interest in the chosen specialty as you did in the residency statement, the expectations for the fellowship statement are more specific. Use these paragraphs to discuss any noteworthy accomplishments achieved—and ideally sought—during residency, such as research you've done, perhaps continued from medical school. Other areas to consider are clinical and teaching achievements. Include how these accomplishments have enabled you to further your career goals. But be realistic about your professional path. Few fellowship applicants have an equal focus in all three areas. Don't overstate your experience; be yourself. Each of the achievement you mention should portray a particular quality about you as a fellowship applicant.

Conclusion

The conclusion for the fellowship personal statement should be more focused than that for residency. Discuss the direction you plan for your career. What do you expect to do after fellowship? While unforeseen events can occur and plans can change, it's important to indicate that you're thinking ahead. And do show how you plan to contribute to their program.

As You Write

- Remember to use active voice when telling your story. Instead of writing “Directing an ICU would be a fulfilling career,” write “I hope to direct an ICU one day.” You want to be the main subject and start of the personal statement – both in the content and grammar.
- Brainstorm to devise what topics and achievements you want to cover in your personal statement. Here are some questions to prompt your brainstorming:
 - What initially drew you to this field and specialty?
 - What traits, values, or characteristics make a great practitioner in this specialty?
 - How would you define those traits?
 - Describe a time you felt you embodied each trait.
 - Are there ways your personal or professional background has prepared you for fellowship?
 - What are you looking for in a fellowship program?
 - What are your future goals in your professional life?
 - What are you passionate outside of medicine? How do those passions influence you as a practitioner?

As You Revise

- Read your draft aloud. Reading your writing aloud can help you hear problems that your eyes didn’t notice.
- Most sources advise that the optimum length for a fellowship statement is from 615 to 650 words, which is shorter than the optimum length for the residency personal statement. If your draft is longer than 650 words, look for wordiness and revise. Be direct. If your draft is shorter than 600 words, consider adding more details to strengthen your statement. In other words, show, don’t tell.
- Seek out feedback from others. Show your draft to friends, family, and professional peers, such as your specialty advisor, key faculty advisers, the chief residents, program director, and associate program directors. Then ask them if they know who you are as a person and a professional after reading your personal statement.