

## Actual School and Job Essay Requirements:

### **UGA Veterinary School:**

We are most interested with your academic and research background, research interests and professional plans. You should also state whether you will need financial assistance in order to pursue the degree.

### **McGill Medical College:**

The Admissions Committee should get a clear image of the applicant and his/her suitability for the practice of medicine, seeking evidence of communication skills, motivation and interest for medicine, personal characteristics and accomplishments, work and learning style, and community involvement.

### **Dental school application** (about 1 page length):

Please write a complete, but concise autobiographical sketch of a maximum of 700 words in the space provided below. Include such things which led you to the idea of being a dentist; why you will be compatible with this profession, and how your life experiences have convinced you of this.

### **Teaching application** (about 1 page long):

Please describe in narrative form particular skills and experiences, and why you chose a career in education.

## The Personal Statement Overview:

This is one of the few parts of the application process that you have complete control over.

The school/program/job will get hundreds of applications—make yours stand out.

If the application requests specific information, *you must include it*.

Do not, with awards, leadership, etc., go back to high school or before—stay focused on college or later.

Avoid clichés (i.e., a medical student who wants to help people).

Sparingly discuss information found in other parts of your application.

What the Reader thinks:

Do we want this student in our program or in our department? (Micro)

Do we want this student at our university, our school system, or our company? (Macro)

Is the student hardworking?

Willing to learn from mistakes (which will happen, no matter what)?

Is the student unlikely to drop out?

How well does the student work when stressed or under pressure?

How well can he/she communicate?

Does the student genuinely care about the field of study/career?

Does the student understand the program/job and has he/she researched it well?

**Aim/Goal:** Stand out from the sea of other applicants and make yourself the most desirable candidate—they should need to have you.

Other Questions to Consider

What can you offer the program?

What do you like about the program?

What do you hope to get from the program?

Where do you want to be in 5 years? In 10?

Why are you the best candidate?

When giving examples, add in a “so what?”—create pictures in your readers’ minds

Writing Tips and Techniques

Brainstorming

Look at the questions in the handout and answer every single one.

Think of at least 2-3 personal experiences that may be relevant, and their *significance*.

Why are you the best candidate?

Writing/Drafting

Write more than you need, anywhere from 50% more to double.

Don't worry about it being good; just make sure you haven't forgotten anything.

Have you answered every question?

Write at least 1-2 sentences to answer each question.

Do you have a conclusion that includes a “wow factor”?

Preliminary Editing

If several answers go together, consolidate those sentences.

Do you have clear, pictorial examples, followed by a So What (significance)?

If not, add them in.

Underline the sentences and ideas that are essential—*choose only the best stuff*.

What information can be taken out (repetitive ideas or extraneous examples)? Do it.

Edit out every bit of fluff and extra wording (adjectives, adverbs, etc.) that you can.  
Format answers into paragraphs and place paragraphs into logical order.  
Write the introduction and conclusion.

The essay should be tight, to the point (don't wander!), and make you look awesome.

### Tentative Outline

Essay of 1-3 pages (or, if necessary, 500-700 words—length is very important!)

1. Introduction
2. Body paragraph(s)
3. Conclusion

Whole essay should try to include (but not necessarily in this order):

1. Learning experiences
  - What made you choose this program/field?
  - Have you overcome something?
  - What tangible thing did you learn (“life lesson”)?
2. Why do you want to study this program and at this university?  
Why do you want to work for this company?
  - Courses taken
  - Books read
  - Research
  - Work and/or internships
  - Personal experience
  - Where will this lead?
3. You are responsible and reliable
  - Leadership positions (have you been in charge of something?)
  - Perseverance
  - Volunteer work
  - Work while putting yourself through school
  - How well do you work in a team?
4. Interests/Skills
  - You should be “well-rounded”
  - Hobbies
  - Languages, technical skills,
  - Prizes and/or awards, honor fraternities
5. Enthusiasm

### Introduction (the hardest part, aside from the conclusion)

It can be an independent paragraph, or the first few lines of your first body paragraph.  
Show enthusiasm for your chosen subject/field/career.  
When did you first realize what you wanted to do?  
Where do you want to go?

### Examples:

My interest in science dates back to my years in high school, where I excelled in physics, chemistry, and math. When I was a senior, I took a first-year calculus course at a local college (such an advanced-level class was not available in high school) and earned an A. It seemed only logical that I pursue a career in electrical engineering. (from Purdue OWL: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/02/> )

"Scientists investigate that which already is. Technologists create that which has never been." I chose engineering as a life pursuit because I wish to engage in both. This choice was enhanced by a personal yearning to apply all that I learn; I wanted to be able to implement my physical and mathematical abilities in real life situations. I feel higher education would enable me to realize this aim. (<http://www.studential.com/bio/getps.asp?ps=557&view=subject> )

For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated by all living things. Throughout my childhood travels I have encountered many natural wonders in various parts of the world, from the giant redwood forests of California, to the rich variety of aquatic life populating the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea, which have all greatly inspired my imagination. Studying Biology at school, especially at A-Level, has made me realize the broad spectrum of fields the subject encompasses, and I am eager to study the different areas in greater depth. (<http://www.studential.com/bio/getps.asp?ps=1039&view=subject> )

From an early age I have been fascinated by the workings of life. The human body is a remarkable machine with many diverse systems producing an organism that could never be artificially reproduced. My love of science is just one of my reasons for choosing medicine. I enjoy a challenge particularly towards a rewarding objective and although medicine is a tough career it can be enormously gratifying, highlighted by the doctors I have spoken to during my experience and on a personal level. (<http://www.studential.com/bio/getps.asp?ps=43&view=subject> )

### Conclusion

It can be an independent paragraph, or the last few lines of your final body paragraph.  
Show enthusiasm and commitment, and go out with a bang.

### Examples:

Professionals have confirmed for me that bioengineering is an intellectually challenging field, requiring commitment and motivation. I have always believed in fully devoting myself to all that

I do, and with my particular interests and experiences, I feel that only an opportunity to study bioengineering at university will enable me to express my abilities in their entirety.

(<http://www.studential.com/bio/getps.asp?ps=557&view=subject> )

Looking to the future, I would appreciate the opportunity to fulfill my ambition of working within the dentistry profession. I feel I have a strong desire, good communication skills and the commitment to undertake the study of dentistry.

(<http://www.studential.com/bio/getps.asp?ps=645&view=subject> )

From Purdue OWL: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/04/>

### **Writing the Personal Statement: Top 10 Rules**

1. Strive for depth rather than breadth. Narrow focus to one or two key themes, ideas or experiences
2. Try to tell the reader something that no other applicant will be able to say
3. Provide the reader with insight into what drives you
4. Be yourself, not the 'ideal' applicant
5. Get creative and imaginative in the opening remarks, but make sure it's something that no one else could write
6. Address the school's unique features that interest you
7. Focus on the affirmative in the personal statement; consider an addendum to explain deficiencies or blemishes
8. Evaluate experiences, rather than describe them
9. Proofread carefully for grammar, syntax, punctuation, word usage, and style
10. Use readable fonts, typeface, and conventional spacing and margins

### **Writing the Personal Statement: Top 10 Pitfalls**

1. Do not submit an expository resume; avoid repeating information found elsewhere on the application
2. Do not complain or whine about the "system" or circumstances in your life
3. Do not preach to your reader. You can express opinions, but do not come across as fanatical or extreme
4. Do not talk about money as a motivator
5. Do not discuss your minority status or disadvantaged background unless you have a compelling and unique story that relates to it
6. Do not remind the school of its rankings or tell them how good they are
7. Do not use boring clichéd intros or conclusions
  - o "Allow me to introduce myself. My name is..."
  - o "This question asks me to discuss..."
  - o "I would like to thank the admissions committee for considering my application."
  - o "It is my sincere hope that you will grant me the opportunity to attend your fine school."
  - o "In sum, there are three reasons why you should admit me..."
8. Do not use unconventional and gimmicky formats and packages
9. Do not submit supplemental materials unless they are requested
10. Do not get the name of the school wrong
11. Do not incorporate technical language or very uncommon words

Stewart, Mark Alan. *Perfect Personal Statements*. New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1996.