A GUIDE TO WRITING A SUCCESSFUL PERSONAL STATEMENT FOR NHS FUNDED COURSES

Issue 1 – April 2015
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview ........................................................................................................................................3

- Researching your subject ........................................................................................................3
- Personal Statement Facts .......................................................................................................4

Writing your Personal Statement ............................................................................................5

- Preparing to write ................................................................................................................5
- Personal statement structure ................................................................................................7
- Paragraph Structure ...............................................................................................................8
- Why is it so important to get your personal statement right ? .............................................8
- Recommended reading before writing your statement .......................................................9

Example Personal Statements ...............................................................................................11

- Children’s Nursing .............................................................................................................11
- Physiotherapy ....................................................................................................................13
- Speech & Language Therapy ............................................................................................15
- Paramedic Science .............................................................................................................16
- Adult Nursing .....................................................................................................................17
- Midwifery ............................................................................................................................19

Important information ...........................................................................................................20

- Do’s & Don’ts when writing your personal statement .........................................................21
- Similarity Detection ............................................................................................................21

Further Advice & Guidance ..................................................................................................23

- Solihull College Careers Contacts ....................................................................................23
- UCAS Mindmap ..................................................................................................................24
OVERVIEW

When applying through UCAS for NHS funded courses, all applicants must complete a personal statement as part of the application. This is often one of the hardest parts and the amount of time and effort that needs to be applied to writing a successful personal statement should not be underestimated.

Solihull College have a team of specialist advisors based in the Careers department in Student Services who are available to support you with your UCAS application and provide support with writing a personal statement. We cannot write your personal statement for you, however, we will provide advice and support on its structure, content and relevance.

Before writing your personal statement it is important to have conducted your research regarding the course options available to you. Research is a vital part of an effective university application; if your research is not thorough, this will show in your application.

RESEARCHING YOUR SUBJECT

University Admissions Tutors are experts in their respective fields and are clear in their vision that personal statements must show an understanding of the professional field being applied for and the degree content.

Here are our hints and tips about how to research and understand your subject area in order to evidence a current understanding of the profession.

- Attend open days at local universities before writing your personal statement. At open days, Admission Tutors often give specialist talks that will inform you with invaluable information that will help you evidence your understanding of the degree applied for.

- Contact university admissions to identify whether they are running any specialist Taster Sessions for students applying for specific courses.

- Identify the professional body for the profession you are seeking to enter. Professional body websites hold vast amounts of information on Careers and often have case studies about professional roles. They also hold current research and up-to-date articles about challenges and developments within the profession. Again, these will assist you in writing an informed personal statement.

- Keep your knowledge up-to-date by reading professional magazine. For example: the Nursing Times or British Journal of Midwifery. Free downloads are available from their websites.

- Get work experience. There is nothing as effective as taking part in work experience to inform you about the realities of a job. Ask the Careers department for a list of work experience and voluntary services contacts.

- Try and arrange a one day work shadowing or a meeting with a practicing professional. By talking to current professionals in the field you will be able to gain information on current issues affecting the profession and a clearer understanding of the professional challenges.

- READ, READ, READ. It is important that you keep abreast of current issues in the Health Service by reading BBC Health, Guardian Health, Nursing Times, Royal College of Midwives, The Nursing and Midwifery Council etc. websites. Stay informed as this will be of great importance should you be successful in securing an interview.
PERSONAL STATEMENT FACTS

1) You can enter up to 4,000 characters (this includes spaces, full stops and commas) or 47 lines of text (this includes blank lines), whichever comes first. You do not have to use all the space provided. When you save text, the system will tell you how many characters are still available or if you have used too many characters. You can preview your statement after you have saved it.

2) You cannot write more than 4,000 characters or 47 lines (whichever comes first) as the UCAS system will not allow this.

3) You cannot use italics, bold or underlining in your personal statement - the system will automatically remove these when saved. This will not disadvantage your application.

4) Do not type your personal statement directly into the UCAS personal statement screen. The system will time out after 35 minutes and you will lose your work that you have not saved. Write up your personal statement in Microsoft Word so that you can adapt and make amendments freely. You can cut and paste your personal statement into the UCAS personal statement screen when you are completely happy with it.

5) Your personal statement will go through “similarity detection software” when your application is submitted to UCAS. Do not copy work from the internet, journals, from your friends’ previously submitted personal statements or from books giving advice on writing a personal statement. This will be detected and is very likely to have a negative effect on your application. Further information on this is provided on page 20.

6) The same personal statement will be sent to all of your UCAS university choices. You cannot write multiple personal statements.
PREPARING TO WRITE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Many students greatest mistake in writing their personal statement is that they neglect to devote enough time to planning it before starting to write. You can see from the facts above that you have a limited amount of space in order to evidence your suitability for a course. It is very important, therefore, that you think carefully about the activities you have undertaken to evidence your skills and suitability for the course.

Step 1: Create a mind map.

Take time to map out all your work or voluntary experience, education, charitable activities or any other relevant experience first. Please refer to the UCAS Mind Map on the following page:
PREPARING TO WRITE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT (continued)

Step 2: Choose your strongest examples

Most applicants have lots of experiences that they could write about. The key to a successful personal statement is ensuring you write about the most relevant and strongest examples that evidence a range of relevant skills and qualities for the profession you are applying for.

Step 3: Map out your skills

For each of your experiences, consider the skills that you utilised, strengthened or gained as result. Think about how these relate to the professional area you are applying for. If you are not sure, look at job descriptions, case studies or the NHS Careers website to understand how the skills you have will benefit you at university, on placement and when fully qualified.

Step 4: Only now can you start to write!

Look at the picture of yourself you have created and decide which you are going to write about first. Don’t worry about writing too much at first. You can edit your personal statement as many times as you wish before sending and the Careers team can help you do this.
PERSONAL STATEMENT STRUCTURE

Below is a suggested format for your personal statement. These are guidelines only, so do not worry if some of the suggestions do not apply to you. Remember, your personal statement can be a maximum of 4000 characters or 47 lines.

**Paragraph 1: Capture the attention of the admission tutor**

- Clearly explain your reasons for applying for the degree subject. What interests you about the subject & why? Where does the inspiration come from? It is important that you demonstrate subject knowledge early on so use some of the knowledge you have gained from your research in your opening statement.

**Paragraph 2: Write about the experiences that make you suitable for the profession / degree**

- Tell the Admissions Tutor about relevant work, voluntary, charity or community experience etc. and identify relevant skills and knowledge that you have gained as a result. It is essential that you show an understanding of the skills that a Health Professional must possess. Look at job descriptions and person specifications on the NHS Careers website if you are not sure. Show understanding of the profession by linking back your skills & knowledge to the profession or saying how they will make you a strong candidate and enable success on your degree.

**Paragraph 3: Evidence your ability to perform academically.**

- Show subject knowledge by writing about how your current studies relate to the degree you are applying for? Talk about something new that you have learnt and discuss how this will benefit you when studying at university or on placement to show understanding of the subject – e.g. how will an understanding of bereavement or psychological perspectives in Health & Social Care benefit you in professional practice.

- Also use your study to evidence your academic skills. These are as important as your other skills as you need to evidence your ability to cope academically on a challenging degree programme. Think about skills such as report writing, academic structure, research, referencing, debating or your ability to construct a critical or balanced argument, for example.

**Paragraph 4: Write about your relevant interests & hobbies**

- If you have interesting & relevant hobbies, you should write a short paragraph about these. Do not write about interests & hobbies that have no relevance. If you decide to write a paragraph about this, it is essential that you identify skills gained from your hobbies and say how these relate to the degree or profession you are applying for.

**Paragraph 5: Summarise**

- In this paragraph, try and summarise the key points that make you a strong candidate for the course. Emphasise the qualities & skills that you have that set you apart from other applicants. This is an important aspect of selling yourself.
- If you can, tell the Admissions Tutor where you would like to specialise once qualified.
- A strong closing statement is important to leave a strong impression with the Admissions Tutor.
Personal Statement Paragraph Structure

Now you know the overall structure of your personal statement, you need to consider the structure of paragraphs 2, 3 and 4. In order to provide a detailed personal statement, evidencing your skills and showing understanding of the profession, it is essential that your paragraphs are structured as follows:

A Activity
Tell the Admissions Tutor what you did.

B Benefit
Tell the Admissions Tutor the skills, knowledge, personal qualities that you gained as a result of the activity.

C Course / Career
Tell the Admissions Tutor how A & B make you a strong candidate. Relate back how the experience, skills and knowledge prepare you for successful study / practice.

Mastering the above paragraph structure is one of the most important parts of writing your personal statement. It enables the writer to demonstrate their research and understanding of the profession / degree.

Why is it so important to get your personal statement right?

The answer is quite simple: - the number of applications for many courses are far higher than the number of places available. Your personal statement and academic reference provided by the college will be the only two documents that an admission tutor reads and uses to make a decision about whether to interview you. Your application needs to be professional, well written, show professional and technical knowledge and passion.

Each year many applicants are rejected because they did not put sufficient time and energy into writing an effective personal statement.

Detailed below are actual reasons for rejection for 2014 candidates:

“Your application has been considered by the Midwifery Team. Unfortunately you have not been selected to come for an interview because your personal statement requires development. It would be useful for you to consider the role of the midwife within the current healthcare environment and what skills and qualities you consider you have to be a midwife”

“Your personal statement requires development or was not as strong as other applications we have received. We would recommend that you consider the role of a Nurse, the essential skills & qualities and research further contemporary issues within the field”.

Regrettably, no applicants are guaranteed an interview. Admission Tutors will make a decision about your suitability for the interview based on the strength of your personal statement and academic reference from Solihull College. Your personal statement could be one of the most important documents you write so dedicate time to getting it right.
**Recommended Reading Before Writing Your Personal Statement**

Before writing your personal statement, we would recommend that you take some time to read some of the following information. Please read this information in conjunction with professional body websites, the NHS Careers website and our useful websites list.

**All NHS Professions**

**The Francis Report**

Following investigations into the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, Sir Robert Francis, QC chaired a full public inquiry into failures at the trust. His report was over 1700 pages long (you do not have to read it all!!!!) however it is essential that all applicants for NHS courses are aware of “some” of the report’s recommendations and the 6 C’s of Care. Full information can be found at - http://www.midstaffspublicinquiry.com/

**Nursing & Midwifery**

- *NMC Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives* – available on the NMC website
- *Midwifery 2020* – available on the Royal College of Midwives website
- *Becoming a Midwife in the 21st Century* – issued by the NMC and available via Amazon
- *Get into Nursing & Midwifery: A Guide to Application and Career Success* – Author: Sarah Snow (available on Amazon)
- *State of Maternity Services Report 2013* – available on RCM website

**Physiotherapy**

- *Physiotherapy Works leaflets* – available on Chartered Society of Physiotherapy website

**Occupational Therapy**

- Health Professions Council (2004) *Standards of Proficiency for Occupational Therapists* – available from the Health Professions Council

**Paramedic Science**

- *Taking Healthcare to the Patient (Transforming NHS Ambulance Services)* – a report detailing how the findings of the Bradley Report into UK Paramedic Services is being implemented. Available from the Department for Health website.
Operating Department Practitioners


Speech & Language Therapy

- Giving Voice Campaign: [http://givingvoiceuk.org](http://givingvoiceuk.org)
EXAMPLE PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Children’s Nursing

My drive to become a children’s nurse has been fired by the journey that my younger sister has gone through. Born 17 years ago with a rare genetic disorder, Phelan-McDermid Syndrome, she is only one of 70 sufferers in Britain and 900 worldwide. Over the years, I have become her second carer and taken on a more supportive role to my mother. My sister is completely dependent on us to help her in all aspects of her life. This ranges from the basics of; washing, dressing, feeding, accompanying her to medical appointments and supporting her in her school life. To trying to understand her moods, why she is unhappy or uncomfortable as she has no way of communicating other than to laugh or cry.

When a child struggles to communicate you have to be very intuitive in understanding their body language and be good at interpreting the subtle signals they display. All these skills I have learnt from looking after her will be invaluable to my children’s nursing career as first and foremost a nurse is there to care and gain a good understanding of situation in a calm and concise manner. As she has grown, we have moved from neo-natal wards to young person’s care, allowing me to see the diversity within the children’s nurse job role, including those in the community such as school nurses and in children’s health care clinics. Also having the access to other departments such as physiotherapy, child development centre and orthotics has given me a better understanding of communication needed between various NHS areas and how they can work together to benefit one child and their family.

Believing the recommendations made by The Francis Report 2013 to improve and maintain strong open lines of communication between healthcare providers, can only benefit and support the NHS as it grows to improve the care and service to patients and their families. The life of an average person my sister's age would have needed the NHS services three or four times. My family and I have felt we have grown up with the NHS being the sixth member of the family. While it has sometimes been a very stressful occurrence, the professionals we have met on our journey have helped ease the pain and have been invaluable, without them the process would be a lot harder. This is one of the many reasons why I would like to be part of this special team.

I have recently changed careers from being a Retail Manager, managing a team of 70 staff and 6 supervisors, to studying Access to Higher Education, Health Studies with the aim of going on to study children’s nursing. Apart from the business side of being a manager, which included organization of the staff schedules, managing attendance, performing department reviews, implementing and leading change from the board and business plan. This ensures all customers are dealt with effectively and efficiently. Working as part of a large team, I have learnt to interact with a variety of people showing empathy, understanding and confidence when dealing with an array of situations. Interpersonal skills I have developed and use on a daily basis are conflict resolution, courage, competency, communication, personal integrity, commitment and being an advocate to enable and empower an individual to see their potential. These skills can again be transferred over into children’s nursing to provide the best care for the child and their family.

I have chosen children's nursing as a career because of personal experience. I know and understand how good knowledge, personal integrity and honest care will affect a patient and their family at their most vulnerable. By understanding the complexity and range in the job role that a children's nurse has, from a premature baby to a young adult, including specialist areas such as neonatal nursing, intensive care or working in a community setting. By helping a child and their family in providing peace of mind, reassurance, sincerity, knowledge and confidence would not only be a career but a vocation I would love to do.
Children’s Nursing

Children's nursing evokes a vast range of feelings within me - pride, excitement and a sense of great opportunity. My voluntary work within a Neonatal department at Birmingham Women’s Hospital has further developed these feelings and affirmed my understanding of the profession. Observing the skill of nurses when communicating with parents, their intuition, empathy and sensitivity which enables them to provide a high quality of care and the subsequent impact this has on all families inspires me. Daily, I see the skills and qualities in nurses embodied in myself.

Whilst volunteering at the Neonatal ward, I have been responsible for inducting parents onto the unit, maintaining stock records, assisting nurses with observations, keeping patients comfortable and being a “cuddler” for babies who require human touch. This has enabled me to develop my skills in communicating effectively with parents who are experiencing often immense levels of stress, as well as experience the different ways in which unwell children communicate their pain. Being able to support parents effectively will enable me to become a successful children's nurse as parents often find their child's illness highly distressing. Similarly, being able to listen and interpret a child's behaviour is vital as children's health can deteriorate rapidly.

Through my work as a Care Assistant with adults with learning and physical disabilities I developed strong care based skills. My role required me to observe and record patients' general health through updating care plans daily. I was required to work on my own initiative, show sensitivity to patients personal needs and often be assertive but kind to ensure that patients’ optimum health was maintained. These skills will enable me work effectively and quickly in the multi-disciplinary teams within a hospital where it is vital that patients’ notes are accurately maintained for other professionals, yet this has also equipped me with the ability to deal with unexpected situations and make decisions quickly to support a patient. This will be vital when dealing with children, young people & their families who are often uncertain or unable to make these decisions for themselves.

Studying on the Access to Higher Education course in Health Studies, I have enhanced many of my academic and personal skills to support my successful transition to the role of student nurse. Balancing multiple assignment, home life commitments and my voluntary commitments has honed my time management and planning skills ensuring that I was able to meet assignment deadlines. Similarly, I have advanced my knowledge of essay writing structure, referencing and synthesizing key themes in my written work. I understand that being able to cope with the academic rigor and the extensive practical elements of a nursing degree require the ability to multi-task and plan whilst continuing to put forward a sensitive, caring and professional approach. My experiences to date have equipped me with all of these abilities.

I understand the importance of continuing professional development within the field of nursing. Whilst waiting to secure a place at university, I am striving to further develop my skills and have secured a position in Domiciliary Care. The opportunity to secure a place as a Children's Nurse has attracted me for years and I have sought to secure appropriate training and qualifications in order that I may achieve this ambition. My ability to support children and their families using my interpersonal skills, enthusiasm, dedication and listening skills will enable me to make the difference currently made by Children’s Nurses every day. I am excited by the opportunity of adding to the profession.
Physiotherapy Example

After experiencing the benefits of physiotherapy first-hand, following two knee surgeries, I wish to study a degree in physiotherapy. During my recovery I developed an interest in the work of a Physiotherapist. I learnt how they use a wide range of practices to improve peoples' quality of life whether they are recovering from injury, operation or living with a long-term condition.

To explore my interest, I completed a range of work experience placements which deepened my enthusiasm. I gained valuable experience with the NHS at Solihull Hospital and Princess Royal Hospital, Telford, where I shadowed Physiotherapists with their diverse work across various departments including neuro, respiratory, stroke, outpatient and inpatient wards. During my placements, I was exposed to the vital work throughout an NHS hospital including the discharge of a patient. Knowing physiotherapists work in a variety of areas, I completed a placement with Camp Hill Charger's Rugby Team, observing rehabilitation, injury assessment and treatment. I have also arranged a placement with a local clinic where I will be able to observe musculoskeletal injury physiotherapy. During my placements, I developed an understanding of the complex, rewarding job and the crucial knowledge needed to successfully rehabilitate a patient. The Physiotherapists use their knowledge to interpret the patients' needs and give them a suitable treatment plan. Throughout my placements it was clear that communication was a vital skill to build trusting relationships with patients so they are involved in their own care whilst being motivated and supported.

Studying the Access to Health course is establishing my scientific knowledge; I am enjoying learning physiology and understanding how the body systems function for overall wellbeing. Studying psychology is giving me an understanding of the impact illness or injury can have on a patient's mind-set and behaviour; I witnessed this during my placements with patients who would initially refuse physiotherapy support. The study skills I am developing, including research and time management skills, combined with my focus and commitment will ensure I succeed at university.

Before going back into education, I worked in the jewellery industry, initially working in retail, where I developed communication skills working with the public, tactfully dealing with a range of situations and working in a team to hit targets. After working in retail, I advanced onto a job working in an auction house. My position was largely public facing where I had to be understanding and compassionate of clients struggling with selling sentimental items, this will enable me to work sensitively with patients and families who may feel frustrated or vulnerable during rehabilitation. My jobs involved working closely in a team to ensure deadlines were met so I can successfully work under pressure and effectively work with various departments. This will help me throughout university during clinical placements in hospitals and, in the long run, the experience will benefit me as a Physiotherapist working as part of a multi-disciplinary team for the best care of a patient.

In my spare time, I study Italian and enjoy growing in confidence with the language. Learning another language has improved my communication skills further and introduced me to new people that I would not have met otherwise. I hope that my continued study of language can be used in the future with anyone who may not have English as a first language.

I understand the focus and commitment needed to study such a demanding degree; nevertheless I have already begun to mentally prepare for experience of academic and clinical study. I want to better myself and help others improve their mobility and day to day function, as I have personally experienced, and I believe I am ready and excited for the fulfilling challenge of both university and my chosen career.
Physiotherapy Example

My childhood unleashed an admiration for physiotherapy, sparked by an unfortunate circumstance when my mother was involved in a car accident. Assisting her to treatment laid the foundations for an appreciation that quickly flourished into a desire to understand, and later study the subject of my career aspiration.

Being able to create positive differences without the use of drugs or surgery is fascinating and my driving force. Having undertaken two separate work experiences alongside Chartered Physiotherapists, I have seen first-hand the implementation of a range of therapies. Whilst working at Heart of England NHS Trust in neurology I saw how the Physiotherapist worked with patients with Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis and spinal injuries by using parallel bars to strengthen muscles improve posture and enhance patients’ ability to walk and how spiky massage balls were used in exercise routines to increase sensation. Whilst working in pulmonary rehabilitation wards and musculoskeletal outpatients, I witnessed how the Physiotherapist created a tailored plan and worked with patients with chronic respiratory problems, such as cystic fibrosis, using exercises and breathing strategies to help improve the patient’s quality of life. Similarly, whilst working with an independent Physiotherapist, I saw how electrotherapy and acupuncture benefitted patients. Throughout both work experiences, I saw the application of great technical and clinical skill, including the modelling of splints for patients with rheumatoid arthritis, immense patience and the positive and encouraging style of communication used by physiotherapists in every patient interaction.

Further exploration on the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists and NHS websites and reading books has helped me to understand contemporary issues effecting Physiotherapists and specialist roles such as orthopaedic, orthotic, amputee and extended scope practitioners. Having the ability to undertake wider reading has enabled me to synthesize and contextualize information when completing my academic work. Having completed the Access to Health course, I have learnt important skills such as effective researching using a range of sources, evolving into an independent learner. I gained confidence when working individually by being taught a range of transferable skills, from organisation, time management and effective interpersonal skills which will prove to be invaluable whilst working with patients. The Access to Science course that I am currently undertaking includes practical assessments requiring the application of theory to practical settings, preparing me for placements and patient assessments by embedding my understanding of key fields such as anatomy and physiology, as well as igniting my interest more specifically on areas relating to neurology, musculoskeletal and cardio-respiratory. Anatomy and physiology fascinates me, especially the study of muscles and tissues, maintaining important but complex anatomical language and details of biology. The development of such skills has enabled me to form a platform upon which to build, and will prove essential when observing patients, developing, implementing treatment plans and monitoring their progression.

Reading biographies helps me to relax; I am fascinated by the level of insights they offer into someone's life, and enjoy understanding the motivations that drive their actions. I also work part time as a member of bar staff enabling me to develop, exercise and adapt my communication, listening and teamwork skills within a diverse community.

With time and experience, my passion for physiotherapy has only deepened. Studying at degree level will enhance my scientific knowledge of ideas rooted at the heart of the subject and, with placements,
enable me to ultimately put such ideas to work in clinical practice. Together this will support me in
meeting the changing demands of such a constantly evolving field. With the many career pathways
that branch from a physiotherapy degree, I am fully committed to the journey of developing into the
responsible professional that I have always aspired to be.

Speech & Language Therapy Example

From experiencing speech therapy as a patient during my adolescent years, I began to take interest
in this area of work as a career. I have had a stammer for the whole of my life, and have had first-
hand experience of being in the patient’s chair. Through my sessions of speech therapy, I noticed
how rewarding and empowering it was to help people who experience speech dysfluency to speak
again.

Working as a speech and language therapist, you have the ability to change someone's life.
Supporting patients by helping them converse, allowing a patient who is experiencing dysphagia to
eat and drink again, offering advice to head and neck oncology patients throughout their treatment
regarding swallowing and supporting patients to learn to communicate using techniques like
oesophageal voice are highlights of the role a Speech Therapist has; reinforcing the caring role SLTs
have on patient care.

Before considering studying as an undergraduate, I began working in a National Health Service
hospital as a Healthcare Assistant on an acute medical ward. During this time, I was able to form
positive working relationships with colleagues and patients alike; which had an encouraging impact on
my confidence. Working within the NHS gave me the chance to see the environment I aspire to work
in and develop as a registered professional; this reinforced my decision to take up a career in speech
therapy.

Working within a hospital gave me the opportunity to acquire new skills and implement them with my
colleagues. Occasionally, leadership skills and assertiveness were needed when conversing with
relatives or colleagues to ensure all tasks were completed and concerns were resolved. This
highlighted how important communication is and how easy it is to form a barrier to communication. In
addition, being aware of my own body language and emotions did have a positive effect on
communication. Not all communication is verbal. Completing a sign language qualification at a school
for the Deaf emphasised how body language is important when conversing with people.

Such interest prompted me to obtain work experience with a Speech and Language Therapist. On
placement, I began with surgical patients, outpatients who had clinic appointments and patients within
the ear nose and throat department. From the work experience I had, it showed me how speech
therapy covers a broad spectrum of departments and emphasised areas of specialisms to progress
in. Whilst on the ward, I had some insight to the responsibilities a Speech Therapist has and how they
fit in to a multidisciplinary area, communicating with all staff on the ward, seeing the patients and
filling in the necessary documents emphasised how they work.

University is an academically challenging environment where periods of stress will occur. However, I
maintain that I am a highly motivated individual and will have the core skills to complete the degree.
Academic skills that I have developed range from Harvard Referencing, events with the current health
sector and topics within anatomy and physiology. The desire to train as a Speech Therapist has been
strengthened by my previous experiences and employment. I look forward to living independently and
will embrace the challenges that university brings.
**Paramedic Example**

Receiving paramedic medical assistance first alerted me to complex, challenging and rewarding aspects of the career. My research began. Quickly I learnt how lifelong learning was essential, whilst the opportunity to intertwine pharmacology, another special interest, fascinated me further. Additional reading about how legalities and ethics also play a significant importance in the role of a Paramedic broadened my horizons. My research has made me aware that the diverse skills needed for this role are amongst some of the most important skills anyone will do in their respective career. My work experience so far has taught me that ECG recognition is vital in a cardiac emergency, as is intubation for airway management in emergency situations. Having academic writing skills are needed for the detailed patient report forms. The amount of different protocols and guidelines are immense, but also essential to patient safety. Daily, the range of illnesses, injuries and age groups that need to be treated vary. All need to be thought out differently and approached non-judgementally to provide patient-centred, effective emergency care.

Choosing to enrol on the Health Studies course is equipping me with the academic skills to succeed at university. Studying Anatomy and Physiology is developing my knowledge of how the body works and the signs and symptoms of illness. Maths continues to develop my ability to calculate medication dosage. Health studies is building my understanding of patients, acute illnesses and injuries as my work experience has taught me that sometimes just talking to a patient about their health and chronic illnesses can have a resounding psychological effect. Additionally, through my studies, I am developing strong research, planning, time management and organisational skills that will ensure I am able to succeed in achieving the high academic standards required. Over the last 9 years, I have worked as a Patient Transport Assistant, and after further training worked as part of an emergency ambulance crew. Working daily in emergency situations has taught me to adapt my communication skills, work under pressure and operate in a non-judgemental and patient centred manner whilst working quickly and effectively with my team members. In conjunction with my advanced driver qualifications, I am prepared for the daily challenges of the degree and career. Bringing my existing experience to the degree will enable me apply practical knowledge to my learning and contribute insightfully to debates and practical assessments.

Through my volunteer work as a medic in Poland, helping special needs students and experiencing different cultures and beliefs, my awareness of ethical issues, cultural differences and complex needs enhanced. As the only medic I have gained more experience working alone and using my initiative. I have gained more knowledge in how to communicate effectively, alleviate pressurised situations, think quickly and work with different public service personnel as part of a multi-disciplinary team. These skills will be critical when responding to both major and minor incidents, both of which have different challenges and often require individualised approaches. One of my passions are my horses. They require daily commitment, care and understanding; these will be just some of the valuable skills I have, which I can then transfer to the degree and my career choice.

Ultimately my goal is to work as a member of the Air Ambulance service. However, my immediate focus is to qualify as a Paramedic, consistently develop my qualifications so that opportunities to become a Critical Care Practitioner are available to me. Life is a continual learning environment, and I am committed to my continuing professional development and will eventually make a difference as Paramedics do every day.
Adult Nursing Example

Adult nursing is a career that will allow me to go the extra mile, to ensure that patients are happy, comfortable, secure and more importantly communicated with, to show them that I am there to help and to confide in. Striving to become a nurse will allow me to fulfil this ambition; this is a rewarding career that offers endless possibilities. The vital skills I have developed for working as part of a multi-disciplinary team include the ability to both debate and share opinions, taking everybody’s opinion into consideration allowing me to operate non-judgmentally. Additionally, I am reliable, caring and a good listener with a high level of dedication, focus and the ability to cope when put under pressure. I am very trustworthy and have a very high ability to develop a relationship with both patients and colleagues quickly enabling me to deliver patient centred care. These skills will enable me to consistently focus on providing the 6 C’s of nursing outlined in the Francis Report and ensure I am able to be a good role model to fellow colleagues and patients.

Through my studies I have developed a high level of enjoyment for caring which has transferred into enthusiasm. Understanding how the body works and what disorders can be a great danger to the body’s function will enable me to recognise signs and symptoms of disease whilst in training. Additionally, knowing what physically and intellectually can change an individual will enable me to adapt my communication to support patients fully. This has helped me to understand what the best care is for those who suffer with ill health. During these studies, I have developed my academic skills to ensure I am able to meet the high standards required. My use of Harvard referencing has developed. I am able to contribute affectively to class discussion and apply theoretical learning into all of my placements. Additionally, I have learnt to reflect on my practice and make improvements. These skills will enable me to monitor my continuing professional development and cope with the multiple deadlines and high academic standards required.

Having participated eagerly in three separate care placements, I have hands on experience of being an essential part of a patient’s routine. I observed how taking time to talk to patients, re-assure them and provide basic needs contributed massively to their spirits, in turn this psychological effect appeared to improve their physical welfare. Observing Physiotherapists, I saw the importance of taking notes, asking detailed questions and communicating clearly. Being involved practically with a Physiotherapist I assisted patients with rehabilitative activities. From this I understood some of the barriers and frustrations that many patients faced. This will enable me to get involved practically in placements, ensure I take time to assist and always come across as caring and compassionate. Additionally, working successfully for the past 3 years in hospitality, alongside college, has enhanced my ability to communicate with a diverse range of people. Having a job has enabled me to experience working well in a team yet also working effectively as an individual. I have also gained good time keeping skills, organisation, reliability, shown trustworthiness enabling me to now adapt myself to people of all ages, cultures and disabilities.

In the future I would like to work with cancer patients. My aim and priority is to provide care to make a difference to each patient's life on both a medical and personal level. Any role in the NHS profession should be based on a caring and ethical standard, whether that is one to one contact with a patient or administration duties. My long term ambition is simple; I wish to give a high level of care to those who are vulnerable and share my future expert knowledge to inform, educate and empower patients and my colleagues.
**Adult Nursing Example**

Adult Nursing is a compelling mix of specialisms; many of which attract me to the profession. Working to support vulnerable people, provide person-centred, empathetic care that enhances an individual's experience of a healthcare setting, whilst ensuring their medical needs are fulfilled, is what drives me to pursue this career. Sir Robert Francis QC’s findings resonated with me that it is patients - and not numbers that count, and that the patients must be the first priority within the NHS. This belief has led me to undertake a wealth of work experience within healthcare in order that I can pursue my goal and make a difference to patients in my role as an adult nurse.

Through studying on the Access to Higher Education programme, I have developed a strong portfolio of academic skills. During study skills, I have learned Harvard Referencing, developed effective research skills, mastered the academic structure of essays and reports and enhanced my planning skills. I have been able to successfully apply these into my academic work in subjects such as Anatomy & Physiology, Psychology and Health Studies. Through Anatomy and Physiology lectures I have learnt about the causes of disease, their symptoms and effects on various age groups. Similarly, in Psychology, learning about the effects of death and bereavement on the wider family network and anticipatory grief has broadened my knowledge of situations faced daily by nursing professionals. These elements combined will enable me to succeed not only in practical work based settings when it is essential to provide client-centred care, but will also ensure that I can achieve the academic rigor required on a nursing degree.

Whilst undertaking two weeks work experience at a GP surgery, I shadowed the practice nurses and witnessed both the high level of care and application of treatments. Through observation of the nurses I saw the critical nature of gathering accurate information regarding symptoms and the nurse’s great skill in building relationships, trust and the patient’s confidence and how this benefitted the patient. During this time, I also saw multi-disciplinary teams in action. Witnessing nurses discussing patients, giving feedback, consulting with doctors and other health professionals I saw how a complex medical team works together to deliver a universal service to its patients. I also saw the relevance and importance of documenting each and every patient that was seen, how referrals were made and how the correct medication was prescribed and recorded. The understanding of the diverse range of ages Adult Nurses work with, coupled with a strong comprehension of the importance of observation, relationship building, attention to detail and recording skills will ensure that I am able to operate as a reflective practitioner during my studies; in order that I am able to continually improve my skills and care and deliver best care to my patients.

Previously, I have also participated in voluntary work with Fresh Winds. Through providing support to elderly women who had both suffered from a stroke, I experienced the communication challenges that can form an everyday part of an adult nursing role. I learnt the importance of simplifying my language and communicating non-verbally in order to provide a positive care experience. Understanding the diverse language barriers that many people face will enable me to work more successfully with patients and enable me to build trust and gain their confidence.

I am hard working and dedicated to this career choice. I am excited about the prospect of university and a diverse career in the many specialisms available within the NHS through completion of an Adult Nursing degree. Future routes I am considering include Oncology, Health Visitor or Community Nursing and I am sure I have the qualities that will enable me to succeed and deliver a high standard of care.
Midwifery example

What other profession could be more privileged than delivering new life? I have been determined for the past 10 years to realise my ambition to become a midwife and I would like to help couples become families. I consider it my vocation as I have a very caring and maternal nature and I immersed myself into the antenatal, labour and postnatal phases of both my pregnancies with ease. I know I will be able to offer great support and be a natural advocate to women by building a crucial, trusting relationship during the emotional, physical and psychological journey of pregnancy.

Clear sighted that midwifery is the right career path for me was confirmed by my recent research into the role. This includes extensive reading, along with attending a 'Maternity Matters' presentation at George Eliot Hospital, which highlighted the reality of the profession. A midwifery taster day held in Birmingham and another in Leamington by Independent Midwives gave me an insight of what the role truly entails, and I am drawn towards the fact that no two days are the same. Having never worked in a healthcare field in the past, I made it a priority to offer my help at my local hospital as a weekly volunteer on the antenatal and postnatal ward. I am gaining an invaluable insight into hospital procedures in a very hands-on way by talking to families, helping change nappies, and bathing newborns which assists the more immobile mothers following caesarean section. I am self-motivated and apply my common sense to help the student midwives and midwives. Also, I am mixing well with my colleagues and demonstrating that I am a people person.

My life experience as a Leading Wren in the Royal Navy primarily laid the fundamental foundations for my career plans. The valuable skills that I learnt are naturally transferrable into midwifery. I can clearly demonstrate, from the disciplined background of the military, that I am resilient and a good team player who is able to communicate with people from all walks of life. Whilst living on a ship in confined living conditions, these qualities were crucial. Likewise, my positive nature will connect with women and their families mindfully irrespective of their religion, background or culture as I am definitely non-judgemental. Being patient, wise and a decision maker saw a promotion to Head of Marketing after I left the Navy. My skills and qualities will enable me to be an autonomous and independent practitioner.

I will always seek advice from colleagues to ensure public safety, as my reading around the field has highlighted the importance of this and the current affairs within NHS England. I would hope that, as outlined in Midwifery 2020, I can work towards supporting women's choice, preventing a more medicalised and litigious care system. The NHS is changing with certain hospitals moving into a more 'privatised' structure. Now that CCG's replace PCT and become more established, this could help bring about a higher level of care in our hospitals, evidenced locally by George Eliot Hospital.

My past academic achievements and my current Access to Health Studies along with my organised, studious work ethic is good preparation for the rigour of the BSc Midwifery at university. The theory and practical combination of study appeals to me and I look forward to normal midwifery practice and clinical placements in year 1. As I grow in confidence to deal with the demands found in year 2, learning the complexities of childbearing; becoming an autonomous midwife in year 3 and completing NMC registration will be a very proud moment! When I qualify I would like to specialise in holistic and natural birth, and become a breastfeeding specialist. My keenness and drive to learn will help me become an outstanding midwifery student. Finally, my settled home life and supportive family are there to help me every step of the way to success and make it happen.
IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS APPLYING FOR HEALTHCARE COURSES

Nursing, Midwifery, Physiotherapy and other NHS Bursary courses are the most fiercely competitive of all courses. It is therefore essential that you investigate for each university, what they look for on a personal statement and their specific guidelines. This information can normally be found on their websites. Alternatively, ask for guidance when attending open days.

Details of the links to local university personal statement guidance are listed below:

Birmingham City University (BCU)
http://blogs.bcu.ac.uk/choices/2008/10/06/tips-for-writing-your-personal-statement/

University of Birmingham (UoB)
http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/accessibility/transcripts/personal-statement.aspx

UCAS
http://www.ucas.com/students/applying/howtoapply/personalstatement/
Dos and don'ts

Do’s and don'ts when writing your personal statement

- **Do** create a list of your ideas before attempting to write the real thing.
- **Do** expect to produce several drafts before being totally happy.
- **Do** ask people you trust for their feedback.
- **Do** check university and college prospectuses, websites and *Entry Profiles*, as they usually tell you the criteria and qualities that they want their students to demonstrate.
- **Do** use your best English and **don't** let spelling and grammatical errors spoil your statement.
- **Do** be enthusiastic - if you show your interest in the course, it may help you get a place.
- **Don't** feel that you need to use elaborate language. If you try too hard to impress with long words that you are not confident using, the focus of your writing may be lost.
- **Don't** say too much about things that are not relevant - if you think that you are starting to waffle, take a break and come back to your statement when you feel more focused.
- **Don't** lie - if you exaggerate you may get caught out at interview when asked to elaborate on an interesting achievement.
- **Don't** rely on a spellchecker as it will not pick up everything - proof read as many times as possible.
- **Don't** leave it to the last minute - your statement will seem rushed and important information could be left out.

Similarity detection

UCAS Similarity Detection Service - guidance for applicants

This guide is designed to help UCAS applicants understand the similarity detection process. All personal statements sent to UCAS are tested for similarity.

There are some example personal statements on the internet that have been used by applicants, in some cases word for word. The service used, called Copycatch, finds statements that show similarity, works out how much of the statement may have been copied, and reports the findings. It helps admissions staff at universities and colleges judge applications, and it is the institutions who decide what action, if any, to take regarding notified cases.

Research has shown that the majority of UCAS applicants do write their own personal statements. However, the number making use of other people's material was high enough to justify the introduction of the Similarity Detection Service.
What the Similarity Detection Service does

Each personal statement is checked against:

- a library of personal statements previously submitted to UCAS
- sample statements collected from a variety of websites
- other sources including paper publications.

Each personal statement received at UCAS is added to the library of statements after it has been processed.

What happens if a personal statement has similarities?

- Any statements showing a level of similarity of 10% or more are reviewed by members of the UCAS Similarity Detection Service Team.
- Applicants, universities and colleges are notified at the same time by email when an application has similarities confirmed.
- Admissions tutors at individual universities and colleges decide what action, if any, to take regarding reported cases.

Eliminated words

The Copycatch process ignores commonly used words that many applicants use in their statements such as ‘and’, ‘so’ and ‘with’. Copycatch also ignores a selection of commonly used words and phrases including ‘Duke of Edinburgh’ and ‘football’.

The verification process

- Copycatch identifies sentences in a personal statement that are matched to other personal statements already held in the Copycatch system.
- Levels of similarity are checked by trained staff who decide whether you and the institutions you are applying to need to be informed that similarity has been found.
- The universities and colleges you are applying to decide on the significance of the results and what action, if any, to take.
- Your personal statement will not be compared to your earlier applications, if you have applied in previous cycles or schemes.

Notification that a report has been sent to the universities and colleges

If Copycatch finds a significant level of similarity in your personal statement and the Verification staff at UCAS decide to inform the institutions you have applied to, UCAS will let you know by email (if you have a verified email address). This email includes instructions on how you can view what Copycatch has found in Track, and gives you a link to frequently asked questions for further advice and guidance.

The report sent to you is identical to the report sent to the institutions. It displays your personal statement marked up to identify sentences similar to others in the Copycatch system.

TIP – Do not plagiarise your personal statement. You will get caught and this may result in your application being automatically rejected by universities.
Solihull College Careers Contacts

Solihull College have a professionally accredited Careers Advisors.

To book an appointment with an Advisor:

Tel: 0121 678 7020/7021

Email: careers@solihull.ac.uk

Or attend a Careers Drop In Session:

Blossomfield : Monday to Friday : 12.00 till 13.00

Woodlands : Tuesday & Wednesday : 12.00 till 13.00

About the Careers Team

The Careers team are an independent and impartial service that provide careers information, advice and guidance that is in the best interest of our students. We are available to assist with a wide range of queries including:

- UCAS Process
- University Choices
- Personal Statements
- Applying for apprenticeships and jobs
- Mock job and university interviews
- Advice and guidance on entry routes to every profession
- Gap Year options
- Labour Market Information

We wish you the very best of luck with your university application and look forward to working with you.

Health Warning

The information included within this guide provides information, advice and guidance based upon information from universities at the time of issue. It is essential that students keep in close contact with universities about their admission procedure, attend open days and keep abreast of issues affecting the profession applied for. Solihull College can accept no responsibility for failure to secure an interview or offer at university.