

Office of National Scholarships

Personal Statement Worksheet

Goals of a Personal Statement:

- Introduce who you are to the selection committee
- Explain why you're applying to this particular opportunity
- Discuss your plans should you be awarded this opportunity

How This Worksheet Can Help:

- This worksheet has questions that can help you develop an outline for your personal statement.
- Use this worksheet for:
 - Award Opportunities
 - Graduate School Applications
 - Internship Applications

The Office of National Scholarships is here to help you create the strongest application possible. If you would like to meet with an advisor to further discuss your application, please contact us at nationalscholarships@usf.edu.



ONS Personal Statement Worksheet

Note: Since the questions below are meant to help students brainstorm answers for various types of applications, some of the prompts below might not be relevant to your specific application. Always defer to your application's requirements and be sure to answer the given essay prompt closely.

As you work through these questions, make sure to keep your answers detailed and specific. Here are some example answers:

1. What made you decide to pursue your major?
 - a. **Vague Answer:** I am studying Integrative Animal Biology because I want to become a veterinarian.
 - b. **Specific Answer:** I am studying Integrative Animal Biology because I want to become a veterinarian. Although I'm not sure if I want to specialize as a large animal vet or a companion animal vet, the Marine Biology course I took as a junior has made me interested in working with marine animals.
 - c. **Takeaway:** The first answer addresses the question, but it doesn't build a narrative around who this student is. The second answer, on the other hand, tells more of a story about how this student discovered their academic and professional interests.
 - d. *Remember, your goal with your personal statement is to tell the story of who you are as a student and aspiring professional.*
2. What kind of work do you see yourself doing in the future?
 - a. **Vague Answer:** I see myself becoming a teacher.
 - b. **Specific Answer:** I discovered a love for teaching while working as a writing tutor in USF's writing studio. As a writing tutor, I helped undergraduate students improve their essays and gain confidence in their writing skills. I found this work fulfilling, and I plan on pursuing a PhD in English so that I can teach literature and writing at the college level.
 - c. **Takeaway:** Answers are always stronger if you ground them in (1) past experience and (2) your future plans.

As you answer the questions on the following pages, remember that your goal is to tell a story about your past experiences and explain how those experiences have influenced your future plans. At the back of this packet, you will find a list of useful campus resources.

You as a Student:

1. How did you come to choose USF for college?
2. What made you decide to pursue your major?
 - a. What motivates you to study this particular field?
3. What are the two most significant courses you've taken, and how did these courses influence the fields you're interested in working in after graduation?


You as a Future Professional:

1. What kind of work do you see yourself doing in the future?
2. What makes you interested in this kind of work?
3. How do your current studies prepare you for this type of work?
4. Do you need more education (e.g. a graduate or professional degree) to qualify for this work? If so, which degree(s) do you plan to pursue?
5. Do you have any previous work or internship experience relevant to your future goals? If so, discuss where you've worked and what drew you to that position.
6. What are your long-term goals for your professional life?

You as a Community Member:

1. Are you involved in any clubs or extracurricular activities on campus?
 - a. If so, which communities are you a part of?
 - b. What inspires you to engage with this community?
2. Have you held any leadership roles in your community?
 - a. If so, give a recent example that best depicts you as a leader.
3. How is your involvement in your community related to your professional interests?
 - a. Are you gaining any useful skills that will help you succeed later in your field?


International Experience:

1. Do you have any past travel or study abroad experience?
 2. Do you speak any other languages? If so, list the language and your fluency. If applicable, it's also helpful to list how many college semesters you spent studying the language.
 3. Are you interested in a new experience abroad? If so, what makes you interested in working and living abroad?
 4. How does experience abroad better prepare you for your future profession?
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Questions for Award Applicants:

1. What are your short term goals for this opportunity?
2. In two sentences, describe your plans for this award should you be selected as a recipient.
3. How does this opportunity fit into your professional trajectory?
 - a. How will this opportunity help you develop skills that will better prepare you for work in your field?
4. Answer the following questions if this award is an opportunity abroad:
 - a. Do you have any past travel or study abroad experience relevant to this award application?
 - b. If so, what did you enjoy the most about this experience? What was the most difficult part of this experience?
 - c. If applicable, do your language skills meet the application requirements? Is language acquisition important to your future work?
 - d. Outside of your work related to this award, how do you plan to engage with the community in your host country?
 - e. How does living abroad better prepare you for work in your field?
 - i. How does completing this award in this specific country connect to your professional goals?

Questions for Graduate School Applicants:

1. How does this degree from this particular institution better prepare you for work in your chosen field?
 - a. If you're interested in graduate study at a foreign institution, how does completing your graduate degree abroad—instead of in the US—benefit your professional trajectory?
 2. When did you first realize you wanted to study this topic?
 3. How do your current studies fit into your plans for graduate school?
 - a. Which courses from undergrad made you interested in pursuing a graduate degree in this field?
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Questions for Internship Applicants:

1. What makes you interested in this company/institution and industry?
 - a. Why is it important for you to intern at this particular organization?
2. Is this a paid or unpaid internship?
3. What past work or academic experience has prepared you for this internship?
4. What skills or experience do you hope to gain from this internship?
5. How does this internship prepare you for your future work?
6. Would you consider working for this organization after graduation? Why or why not?

Campus Resources:

Office of National Scholarships

This office helps students apply to national scholarships that fund language learning, research projects, and graduate study both domestic and abroad.

<https://www.usf.edu/ons/opportunities/search-database.aspx>

Career Services

Career Services provides job search coaching and resume and cover letter writing assistants to students. All of their services are provided on a walk-in basis, so there's no need to make an appointment.

<https://www.usf.edu/career-services/>

