



Personal Statements – Medical

The information contained in this handout is specific to the TTUHSC Medical School admissions process. However, much of the information is relevant to any health career application process.

Personal Statements

Personal statements need a hook; remember that TTUHSC Admissions receives thousands of applications and each essay is read by at least one member of the admissions committee. There is no prescreening based on MCAT scores.

If using a negative experience as the hook:

- ◆ Put a positive spin on it. What did you learn? How did this experience influence your career choice?
- ◆ Do not overwhelm the reader with details of the experience; instead, focus on using the experience as a hook that will draw in the reader. The negative experience should not be the focus of the entire essay.

Required versus optional essays:

- ◆ TTUHSC has two required essays and one optional essay – applicants should submit all the essays.
- ◆ The two required essays discuss experiences and values. Think of the audience when writing the essays.

There are two types of faculty on the admissions committee, scientists and clinicians. The scientists are seeking factual details and examples of deductive reasoning. The clinicians are looking to see what you experienced and how it made you feel. Work to combine these two threads of information into the essay, while giving a true picture of yourself.

Essay Recommendations

- ◆ No profanity.
- ◆ No inappropriate jokes.
- ◆ Think in terms of your parents and grandparents reading the essay and write in a respectful tone.
- ◆ Avoid colloquialisms that might not be easily understood by readers. If you are unsure, rewrite to avoid the colloquialism or slang.
- ◆ Go beyond spell check; get proofreading help. Utilize the University Career Center and the TTU Writing Center for help.
- ◆ Choose someone to read the essay who knows you well – make sure you have not gotten away from who you are as a person.
- ◆ Do not say “I want to help people” – many careers help people; write specifically why you have chosen medicine or a healthcare field. Clarify the why, the who, and the how in the essay.
- ◆ Do not bash doctors or medicine. If you have had a bad experience, tell what you learned from the experience and what you can contribute to medicine.
- ◆ Students tend to write from one of two perspectives: an epiphany or a reaffirmation over time. The epiphany is a single experience that confirms your interest in medicine. With reaffirmation, students have multiple experiences that substantiate their decision to pursue medicine.
- ◆ Personal statements need to demonstrate meaning behind the experience – not just the experience itself. The scientists reading the essay want to know what you learned and how you learned it. Clinicians want to know about your interactions with patients and how you feel about healthcare and medicine. The personal statement needs to be a picture of you – not what you think the admissions committee wants to hear.

Misdemeanor and Felony Criminal Disclosures

Be honest when answering self-disclosure questions. Any criminal or legal issues that required deferred adjudication (which is the first step to having it expunged from the record) must be disclosed on the application because the background checks will bring up any experiences that have been expunged. If not disclosed, you have lied by omission. A lawyer may tell you that you do not have to provide expunged information, but do so anyway. Lies and felony convictions will prevent medical schools from accepting you.

Interview Tips

Interviewers expect the candidate to be nervous, so they are looking for good nonverbal communication. The format of the interview is conversational and one-on-one; the interviewer will ask at least one ethical or situational question. This question is meant to give the applicant an opportunity to demonstrate thinking processes, critical analysis, and judgement.

Other questions during the interview are at the interviewers' discretion. They can ask about any information from the application, the essays, or the resume. They may also ask about current events relevant to medicine.

Be professional at all times – even when not in the interview. The interview begins the moment you drive into the parking lot and you are being unofficially evaluated at all times, even by people who are not actually interviewing you.

In the interviews, candidates need to be animated and show a spark of personality – the interviewers are seeking to make a personal connection and get to know you. Be yourself, but also be interested and enthusiastic about your interest in the program.

What to do if you aren't accepted.

If you apply and do not get admitted to medical school, prepare to reapply. Use the time to learn new things and demonstrate what you have done during that year that relates to medicine. For example, get a job in the medical field or take a course related to medicine.

Rewrite your essays to show self-reflection and growth. Explain how you engaged your mind during that year. Because you have been out of the educational system, you need to reassure the committee that you can hit the ground running and that you are still in learning mode. Kahn Academy has some excellent online courses and free MCAT seminars that can point out deficiencies that need work. The seminars WILL NOT be sufficient to prepare you for the MCAT.

If you do not get an interview, it may be because you have no medical experience. Volunteer and shadow as much as possible. Hands-on experience in the medical field will help your application.

GPA

A high GPA makes you more competitive; however, grades are not the most important criteria for the committee. On average, 80% of medical students have one bad undergraduate semester. The committee looks for grade trends. A bad freshman semester is generally overlooked if the grade trend is upward in the following semesters and the GPA improves. The committee expects good grades in the junior and senior semesters.

In the personal statement, explain any issues with a downward grade trend. You should demonstrate resilience and the ability to overcome adversity.

Essay Questions

Do not repeat application information in the essay. Add information that makes you stand out; you need additional information – find a theme! A theme can help you contextualize your information to connect with the reader in an engaging way.

The diversity question asks the student: what makes you unique? Provide information that shows uniqueness in your experiences and/or personality. Consider topics such as international experiences and study abroad in your essays.