

Guidance notes for writing the personal statement

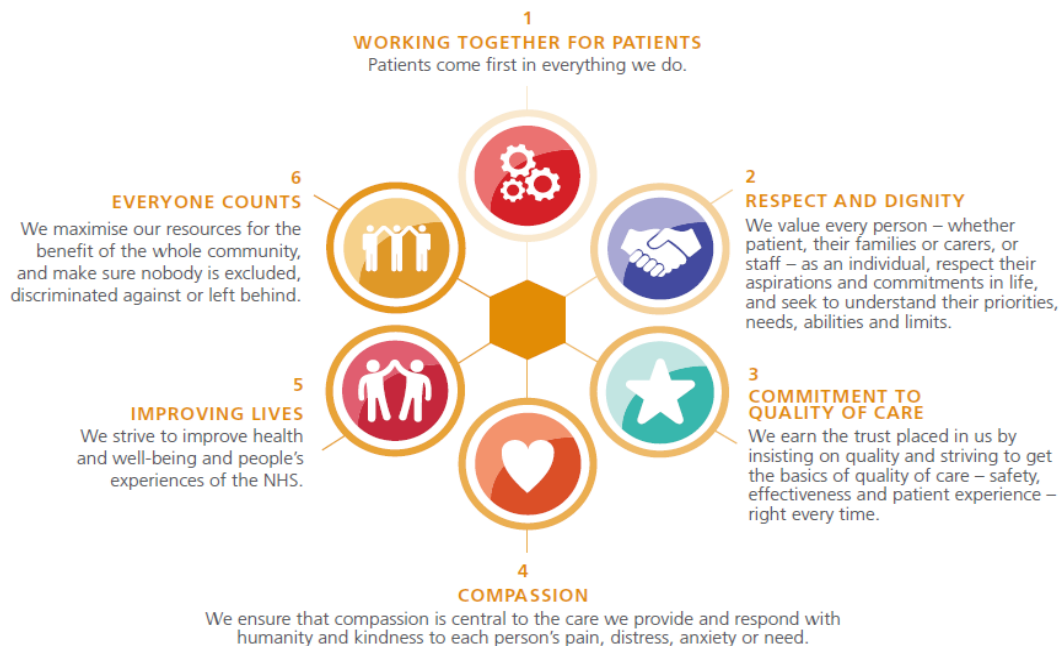
For 2025 entry, Keele will be using the UCAS personal statement as a component of the evidence for selection for home applicants.

When writing the personal statement, you must address the criteria listed below and provide evidence for how you have demonstrated them. Please be aware that statements that clearly address these criteria will also be viewed favourably by most other medical schools.

Values-based recruitment and the NHS Constitution

Throughout the NHS, applicants for jobs must demonstrate adherence to the values listed in the [NHS Constitution](#). These are:

The values of the NHS Constitution



Taken from [Health Education England value-based recruitment framework 2014](#)

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We expect applicants for medicine to exhibit these values through roles and responsibilities you have taken on.

The person specification for a Keele medical student

We have developed a person specification for a Keele medical student. This is along the same lines as a person specification used for selecting job applicants in many fields. There is a list of essential characteristics that you must demonstrate to be selected for interview, and these are aligned to the NHS values.

The essential criteria are:

Criterion	Relevant NHS values
Awareness of the roles of a doctor within the healthcare team, community and society	All
Ability to engage meaningfully with people who have some need of care, support and/or help	Respect & dignity Improving lives Everyone counts
Ability to communicate effectively with a variety of people	Respect & dignity Everyone counts
Willingness to take on responsibility and fulfil it to the best of your ability	Working together (for patients) Commitment to quality (of care)
Ability to maintain one or more significant activities alongside your academic studies over a prolonged period	Commitment to quality (of care)
Evidence of having made a positive difference to another person's life	Compassion Improving lives

Please note that you are not expected to have experience of working in medical or formal care settings, so references to “patients” above may refer to anyone who you have cared for, supported or helped in any way, and “care” may also refer to support or help in non-care settings such as your school/college, community organisations, workplaces or voluntary settings.

How to address the criteria in your personal statement

Your personal statement must include examples of how you have demonstrated each of the essential criteria. Please note, you are not required to spell out which criterion or criteria you are addressing in each paragraph, as this would not be compatible with writing a single personal statement for all of your choices. However, scorers will check that you have clearly addressed each criterion.

Examples may come from any area of activity, whether this be school/college/university, family, community, volunteering or paid employment. Examples that represent engagement over a prolonged period will be viewed more favourably than one-off or very short-term activities.

Please note the following specific exclusions:

- shadowing/observation: we will not give any credit for things you have observed other people doing except in the context of awareness of the role of a doctor within the healthcare team (criterion a); for all other aspects of the statement, you must tell us about things you have done yourself

- “work experience tourism”: we expect you to have gained experiences within your own community and locality; we will not look favourably on experiences gained in other countries, especially where these involve unnecessary long-haul air-travel and taking away employment from local people; if you are required to spend long school/college vacations abroad for family reasons, please make this clear as a reason for having undertaken experiences overseas; you will not be given credit for any activities you have undertaken in other countries that would not be permitted in the UK (e.g. direct patient care while unqualified and underage, or unsupervised care of children or vulnerable adults)
- roles and responsibilities within your job description: if you write about things you have done as part of a paid job that is your main occupation (i.e. not a part-time job undertaken alongside full-time study), we will only give credit for things that go above and beyond the expectations of your role; for example, things you have introduced or improved on your own initiative that have benefited your customers/clients and/or colleagues

The following notes outline expectations for each criterion.

a. Awareness of the roles of a doctor within the healthcare team, community and society

Please note: experience in clinical settings (hospital or general practice) is not required or expected. You should provide some indication of what you understand about what a doctor’s role involves, how you found this out (e.g. online work experience, named web sites, etc.) and why it appeals to you.

b. Ability to engage meaningfully with people who have some need of care, support and/or help

You should tell us about one or more experience(s) you have undertaken in which you engaged directly with people. Include details of how long you did this for, when and where you did it and what your specific role(s) was/were. For example, if you volunteered in a care home, please state what you were specifically asked to do and how you did it, rather than writing generically about what happens in a care home. Examples may come from paid or voluntary roles in any area, particularly where these involve working with a diverse range of people.¹ Caring within your family will not normally be given substantial credit unless you have young carer status and your caring responsibilities take up a significant amount of time. Young carer status should be mentioned explicitly.

¹ Examples might include assisting customers with specific needs in retail/catering settings, supporting people within sports or other clubs/societies, assisting or supervising people in public facilities (e.g. gyms, swimming centres, etc.) or community groups (e.g. scouts & guides, faith groups, etc.), playing a role in your local community (e.g. in food banks, homeless shelters, charities, with vulnerable neighbours, etc.), volunteering in care homes, hospices, special schools, etc., coaching younger students or those with specific needs in sports, music, reading, maths, etc. There is no priority given to particular settings: credit is given for the role you took on and how you fulfilled it.

c. Ability to communicate effectively with a variety of people

You should include details of how you have communicated effectively with people who are in some way different from yourself: older/younger, from different backgrounds/cultures, with sensory impairments or learning disabilities, etc. You may provide these details for experiences you have used to demonstrate the other criteria: you don't have to write about a separate experience. You must provide examples of how you have communicated effectively. Simply saying a role developed your communication skills is not sufficient.

d. Willingness to take on responsibility and fulfil it to the best of your ability

You should tell us about a significant and specific responsibility you have taken on and how you have fulfilled it. This should be a position of responsibility or leadership (e.g. president or secretary of a society, captain of a sports team) or a specific responsibility within a team (e.g. the member with specific responsibility for organising part of the team's activity) and should represent a commitment to ensuring the quality of the organisation or team is as high as possible.² Roles within school/college or with external bodies are equally valid, as long as they include responsibility for the functioning of a team and/or other people's success or wellbeing. The expectations for responsibility are substantially higher for applicants who are 20 or older, as you will have had much greater opportunity to take on responsibilities since passing 18. No credit is given for titles (e.g. head boy/girl, Duke of Edinburgh Award expedition leader, etc.): you must tell us about a specific responsibility you fulfilled in that role.

e. Ability to maintain one or more significant activities alongside your academic studies over a prolonged period

We need to know that you are able to balance a variety of demands on your time, as this is a key skill required of people in high-pressure occupations like medicine. It may be that the employment, volunteering or other roles you have told us about elsewhere in the personal statement demonstrate this ability if they are clearly things that have taken up a lot of your time. In particular, if you have to work to earn money to contribute to your family income or to support you when you go to university, this might account for a large proportion of your time. Otherwise, you might have significant leisure pursuits – such as competitive sport, music or other creative activities, campaigning, etc. – that you would like to tell us about as evidence of your ability to balance outside interests and activities with your studies while maintaining the quality of both. To gain high marks for this criterion it must be clear how great a time commitment the additional activity involves.

² When choosing a responsibility to write about, think about whether you could say what you had responsibility *for* and who you had responsibility *to*. You don't have to write about these aspects, but if you can't think of answers to these questions it is unlikely that the example represents a significant responsibility.

f. Evidence of having made a positive difference to another person's life

We expect healthcare practitioners to be driven by compassion and the desire to improve people's lives. You should tell us about an individual you have helped in a significant way. This will usually involve a long-term engagement rather than a single contact in an emergency or other acute situation. Tell us what the person needed to be helped with, how you helped them and how they benefited from what you did. Examples may come from experiences that you have written about in relation to other criteria. If you use examples from within your family or friendship group, they must provide evidence of something you did to help that goes well beyond normal expectations.

Reflection

For each criterion, please note the relevant NHS values in the table on page 2 and include details that show you have demonstrated these.

You do not have to tell us how the individual examples you have given relate to medicine. We have defined the criteria because we already know they are relevant to the role of a doctor. Please use the space available in your personal statement to tell us what you have done, not why you think we should be impressed by it.

However, you may wish to conclude your statement with a summary of how the various characteristics you have demonstrated relate to the role of a doctor that you wrote about in response to criterion a.

The experiences you write about should be reasonably recent. If the opportunity to take on a significant role happens to have come up a few years ago, it is fine to write about it. However, it would not be appropriate for all of the experiences you write about to be from several years ago: we expect you to be engaged continuously in the kinds of activities we ask you to write about, and they should not be something you do just because you need something to put in a medical school application. Any kind of box-ticking or superficial engagement will be looked on unfavourably.

Presentation

Please make sure your statement is written clearly, and check your spelling and grammar carefully. Do not exaggerate your contribution in any roles you write about, particularly where they relate to care of children or vulnerable adults as this could raise concerns about safeguarding and require us to contact the provider.

We do not require or expect experience in medical settings. Please do not use up space telling us about how you tried to get medical work experience: use the space to tell us what you did, rather than making excuses for what you didn't do. If you do write about experiences in medical settings, please do not use medical jargon or undefined abbreviations: we will treat these as examples of poor communication.

Writing one personal statement for multiple medical schools

We recognise that the criteria detailed above are very prescriptive. You may, therefore, wonder how to address our criteria while also addressing those required by other medical schools. You should make careful note of how your other choices use personal statements, as most UK medical schools make little or no use of UCAS personal statements in selection. Where there are specific criteria indicated to be addressed in your personal statement, these will, in most cases, align closely with ours even though they might be worded differently. Where we require details that are not specifically requested by other medical schools (e.g. an example of making a positive difference to an individual), please make sure that you allow space for this. Try not to waste space writing about things that none of your choices have asked for.

As stated on the web page where you accessed this document, it is your responsibility to make sure your school/college knows what criteria you have been asked to address in your personal statement. Please contact your head of sixth form, UCAS adviser or other relevant staff member as early as possible to draw their attention to our requirements. We are not interested in the details of your choice of A-Level subjects, and we don't really want to know about a book you have read unless it is directly relevant to one or more of the criteria you have been asked to address. If you use up space writing about these things you will be putting yourself at a disadvantage relative to other applicants. Selection of medical students is based on assessing your suitability to be a doctor. We need to know about things you have done that demonstrate this.

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