

Medentia Free Resource

How to Write a Personal Statement That Actually Gets You Offers

Made by Haroon — Medicine offers from both applications | 98% offer rate across tutored students, 2026 cycle

This resource is built around the actual UCAS personal statement questions introduced for 2026 entry. A lot of guides online are still written for the old single-box format — this one isn't. We're going through each question properly, what it's actually asking, how to approach it, and the mistakes that cost people offers.

I got medicine offers from both of my applications. I'm not saying that to show off — I'm saying it because everything in this guide comes from real experience, not theory. Use it properly and it will make a genuine difference to your statement.

Before You Write Anything — The Brainstorm

The biggest mistake people make with personal statements is opening a blank document and just starting to type. You end up writing about whatever comes to mind first, which is almost never your strongest material.

Before you write a single word of your actual statement, spend time doing this properly.

Step 1 — Dump everything down

Grab a piece of paper or open a notes doc and write down every single experience you've had that's even remotely relevant. Don't filter yet, don't judge whether it's good enough, just get it all out. This includes:

- Every work experience placement (hospital, GP, care home, dental practice, pharmacy, anything)
- Volunteering (including things that aren't medically related — caring for a family member, community work, anything involving responsibility for others)
- Academic achievements and projects (EPQ, research projects, competitions, anything beyond standard A-levels)
- Extracurriculars (sport, music, leadership roles, part-time jobs, tutoring)
- Personal experiences that shaped how you see medicine or healthcare (this could be something that happened to you, a family member, or someone close to you)

- Things you've read, listened to, or watched that genuinely influenced your thinking about medicine

Write all of it down. You're not committing to using any of it yet — you're just making sure nothing gets forgotten.

Step 2 — Identify what each experience actually taught you

Now go through the list and next to each experience, write one sentence about what it actually taught you. Not what you did — what you learned. This is the part most people skip, and it's the most important part of the whole process.

If you did work experience at a hospital and you can't write a single sentence about what it changed or confirmed about your thinking, that experience isn't going to land well in a personal statement. That doesn't mean you leave it out — it means you need to go back and actually reflect on it before you try to write about it.

Step 3 — Pick your strongest material

You won't use everything. You shouldn't use everything. A personal statement that tries to mention every single thing you've ever done ends up being a list, and lists don't get offers — stories and reflection do.

Pick the experiences that either taught you something genuinely specific and meaningful, or that show a quality that's directly relevant to medicine. If two experiences taught you the same thing, pick the more interesting or unusual one.

Understanding What the Questions Are Actually Asking

The new UCAS format splits your personal statement into three questions. Each one has a specific job to do, and if you don't understand what that job is, you'll answer the wrong question — even if your writing is good.

Question 1: "Why do you want to study this course or subject?"

What it's actually asking: Why medicine or dentistry specifically, and why now — based on real experience and reflection, not ambition or interest alone.

This is the most important question in your entire statement. It's also the one where most people fail, because they answer the question they wish had been asked ("tell me about yourself") rather than the one that's actually there.

Interviewers and admissions tutors read thousands of personal statements. They can tell within two sentences whether someone has actually thought about this or is just writing what they think sounds good. The phrases that appear in almost every weak personal statement:

"I've always been passionate about helping people," "medicine combines science and people," "I was inspired by watching my GP as a child." These aren't wrong — they're just meaningless without something specific behind them.

What a strong answer looks like:

It starts with something real. A specific moment, experience, or observation that genuinely shifted or confirmed your thinking — and crucially, something that's yours. Not generic. Not borrowed. Something that happened to you or that you witnessed that made you understand something about medicine that you couldn't have understood just from reading about it.

Then it follows the thread. What did that moment make you do? Did it push you to seek out work experience? Did it make you read something? Did it make you ask questions you hadn't thought to ask before? Show the interviewer that your interest led somewhere — that you did something about it.

Then it gets honest about the reality. Medicine is genuinely hard. The training is long, the emotional weight is real, the system is imperfect. The strongest answers acknowledge this and explain why that reality doesn't put you off — because you've seen enough of it to understand what you're getting into and you still want it.

From my own statement:

I opened with how my interest developed during the pandemic — watching the impact doctors had on people's lives up close. That was a specific, real experience that shaped my thinking. I didn't just say "the pandemic inspired me" — I wrote about what I actually witnessed and what it made me understand about the role of a doctor. Then I connected that to the experiences I sought out afterwards as a result of it. That's the thread you're looking for.

Common mistakes on this question:

Leading with generic interest rather than a specific moment. Writing about wanting to help people without explaining what that actually means in practice — interviewers know you want to help people, everyone applying wants to help people, that's not what they're assessing. Not connecting your experiences to your motivation — you need to show that your work experience, your reading, your extracurriculars all fed back into and deepened your understanding of why you want to do this, not that they were separate boxes you ticked.

Question 2: "How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?"

What it's actually asking: What have you done academically beyond the standard A-level curriculum, and what did it actually develop in you?

This question is not asking you to list your qualifications. Everyone applying has good A-levels — that's just the entry requirement, not a differentiator. What this question is looking

for is evidence that you engage with science and medicine intellectually, beyond what you're required to do for your grades.

What a strong answer looks like:

It focuses on specific academic experiences that went beyond the syllabus — a research project, an extended essay, a competition, an online course, independent reading. For each one, it explains not just what you did but what it developed in you as a thinker and as a future medical student.

The key word in this question is "prepare." Don't just describe what you did — explain how it prepared you. What skills did it build? What did it teach you about how you learn, think, or engage with complex information? How does that translate into being ready for a demanding degree?

From my own statement:

I wrote about a Year 12 research project on AI in healthcare, stem cells, and gene therapy. I used the BMJ, created a bibliography, and compared methodologies across different studies. But the point wasn't to list those things — the point was to explain that it developed my scientific writing, my ability to evaluate conflicting evidence, and my understanding of how AI is being applied to real diagnostic problems. That's preparation. That's what the question is asking for.

I also included the Foundation for Assisting in a Care Home course I completed through State University of New York during my gap year — modules on mental health, dementia, and working with elderly patients. Again, not just listed — I wrote about how it deepened my understanding of patient dignity and the importance of providing diverse, person-centred care. That's directly relevant to medicine, and it shows I was actively pursuing knowledge outside of formal education.

Common mistakes on this question:

Just listing qualifications and grades — that's what your predicted grades section is for. Writing about A-level content without explaining why it's relevant beyond "I find biology interesting." Not having any academic experience beyond the standard curriculum — if you're reading this early enough, this is worth thinking about now. An EPQ, a relevant online course, a research project, even structured independent reading with real reflection attached to it will all strengthen this section significantly.

Question 3: "What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?"

What it's actually asking: What have you actually done in the real world — work experience, volunteering, extracurriculars — and what did those experiences show you or develop in you?

This is where most of your work experience and personal qualities go. It's also where a lot of people get it wrong by treating it as a chance to impress with the volume of things they've done, rather than the depth of what they learned.

What a strong answer looks like:

It picks a small number of experiences and goes into real depth on each one. Not a highlight reel — a genuine reflection. For each experience, you want to explain what you observed or did, what surprised you or challenged your thinking, and what it taught you about yourself or about medicine that you couldn't have learned in a classroom.

The most powerful entries in this section come from moments of genuine observation — something you saw during work experience that stuck with you, a situation that made you think differently about what doctors actually do, an interaction that illustrated something about the human side of medicine in a way that no textbook could.

From my own statement:

During Covid, I used my 3D printer to produce face shields for staff at West Middlesex Hospital and my local surgery. I joined a PPE distribution group, coordinated with medical staff around their logistical requirements, and also helped pack and organise food parcels for airline passengers in hotel quarantine. I wrote about how this deepened my understanding that care and compassion go beyond the physical — that addressing emotional and social wellbeing is as much a part of medicine as clinical treatment. That reflection is what made the experience meaningful in a personal statement, not the act of printing face shields itself.

At St George's Hospital I witnessed patient consultations that demonstrated the importance of taking thorough medical histories — how the information that tests can't capture is often what changes a diagnosis. I watched a doctor assess a patient presenting with chest pain, dizziness and anxiety, and I wrote about how the way that doctor communicated — reassuringly, clearly, with the nurses and technicians working alongside them — visibly reduced that patient's stress before any treatment was given. That moment taught me something concrete about multidisciplinary teamwork and communication that I couldn't have gotten from a textbook. That's the kind of reflection this question is asking for.

I also included leading a semi-professional football team of 14-16 year olds as a captain, because it developed real leadership skills — making quick decisions under pressure, fostering teamwork, maintaining discipline. I didn't just list it. I explained why those specific skills matter in medicine and how developing them changed the way I operate in high-pressure situations.

Common mistakes on this question:

Listing experiences without reflecting on them — "I did work experience at a hospital and learned a lot" is not an answer, it's a placeholder. Writing about experiences that don't actually connect to medicine in any way, even with a stretch. Not including non-medical experiences that demonstrate genuinely relevant qualities — leadership, resilience, communication, responsibility. These matter and they belong here, as long as you connect them properly.

The Writing Itself — Practical Advice

Write first, edit later. Don't try to write a perfect first draft. Get your ideas down, then refine. The best personal statements go through multiple drafts — usually at least four or five.

One experience in depth beats five experiences in one sentence each. Every time. Admissions tutors are not counting your experiences — they're assessing your ability to reflect and communicate. Three experiences explored properly will always outperform ten experiences listed quickly.

Read it out loud. If it sounds like something you'd never actually say, rewrite it. Your personal statement should sound like an articulate version of you, not like a formal document written by someone trying to sound impressive.

Avoid these words and phrases entirely: passionate, dedicated, ever since I was young, I have always wanted to, multifaceted, it goes without saying, needless to say. They appear in almost every weak personal statement and add nothing.

Get someone who knows medicine to read it. Not just for grammar — for whether it actually sounds like someone who understands what they're applying for. A personal statement that reads well but shows a naïve understanding of the role will still hurt you.

Check the character limits. Each question has its own limit in the new UCAS format. Don't go over. Don't leave huge amounts unused either — if you've got significantly less than the limit, you probably haven't gone into enough depth.

A Final Note

A personal statement won't get you an offer on its own — your grades, your UCAT score, and your interview performance all matter. But a weak personal statement can absolutely cost you an interview invitation, especially at competitive universities where the numbers are tight and they're looking for any reason to narrow the field.

The difference between a good personal statement and a forgettable one almost always comes down to reflection. Not how impressive your experiences are — how honestly and specifically you've thought about what they taught you.

If you want support going through your personal statement with someone who's been through the process and come out the other side with offers, head to medentia.co.uk. I offer 1-1 personal statement review sessions where we go through your draft together, strengthen the structure and content, and make sure every paragraph is actually doing the job it needs to do.

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