

WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT FOR GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS

Some fellowships ask you to submit a general personal statement, while others ask for several essays about your personal and professional background. For any of these statements, ask yourself the questions in this guide to decide what experiences and ideas to include to show that you are well-suited to the proposed project and that you will help the funding institution achieve its goals.

Understand the Fellowship Goals

Identify the funding institution's priorities

Find the mission statements for this funding opportunity and for the broader funding institution. What are their main priorities? What do they aim to contribute to academia or to the world? Are they focused on your project area or some broader field?

Understand the essay prompt

Carefully study the prompt for the personal statement essay. What are the key things they're asking for? Are there key phrases you can mirror in your essay to demonstrate alignment with the prompt?

Identify Your Relevant Experiences and Goals

Your motivations

What experiences, interests, or commitments motivate your proposed activities? How have these been shaped by your background?

Your professional qualities

What kind of person do you want the reviewers to encounter in your application? Which of your professional qualities can you highlight to paint that picture of yourself? In what specific situations have you demonstrated these qualities?

Your preparation

How are you uniquely qualified to undertake your project? What previous experiences have prepared you for it?

Craft Your Narrative

Review your examples

What does each example demonstrate about your professional qualities? For each example, can you tailor it to more concisely and effectively bring out that point?

Align with the fellowship goals

How can you help the funding institution achieve its goals via your proposed project, or via your association with the funding institution? How can you match your motivations, professional qualities, and preparation to the essay prompt?

Connect the dots

How can you narrate your personal trajectory to clearly show how it will be continued by the proposed study, travel, or research? How do you envision this fitting into your long-term plans? How can you arrange your examples to make this narrative clear and compelling?