

Online Data Supplement

What Do Program Directors Value in Personal Statements? A qualitative survey evaluation

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What Program Directors look for in Personal Statements

Please complete the survey below.

Thank you!

1) How important is the personal statement when making the decision to offer an interview?

- Very important
- Important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important (do not use)

2) How important is the personal statement when making rank order decisions?

- Very important
- Important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important (do not use)

3) What does the personal statement tell you about an applicant?

4) What characteristics define a good personal statement?

5) What characteristics define a bad personal statement?

6) What advice do you give applicants for writing personal statements?

7) Where is your program located?

- 1. Midwest
 - 2. Northeast
 - 3. South
 - 4. West
 - 5. Outside of the United States
-

8) What is your primary program affiliation?

- Academic
 - Community based
 - VA or military
-

9) How many total fellows are in your program?

- 5 or fewer
 - 6-10
 - 11-15
 - 16-20
 - More than 20
-

10) What is your role in the fellowship program?

- Program Director for Pulmonary and Critical Care Fellowship
 - Program Director for Pulmonary Fellowship
 - Program Director for Critical Care Fellowship
 - Associate Program Director for Pulmonary and Critical Care Fellowship
 - Associate Program Director for Pulmonary Fellowship
 - Associate Program Director for Critical Care Fellowship
-

11) Gender

- Female
 - Male
 - Prefer not to answer
-

12) Age (years)

- 40 or less
 - 41-60
 - Over 60
 - Prefer not to answer
-

13) Years as Program Director

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- More than 20

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<i>Category</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Descriptor</i>
<i>What the personal statement tells you about an applicant</i>		
<i>Applicant as a Person</i>	Who the applicant is as a person	Priorities, personality, abilities and limitations
<i>Background Info</i>	Explanation of gaps in training or problem areas	
	Interest in specialty	Why applicant wants to pursue a career in PCCM/CCM
	Personal history	Life experiences in and out of medicine, obstacles overcome
<i>Communication Skills</i>	Writing skills	Grammar, organization, flow, writing style
	Proficiency in English language	If English is a second language, is the applicant able to engage in written communication
<i>Career Goals of Applicant</i>		Expression of clinical/research/education interests
<i>Fit with Program</i>		Does this applicant seem like a good fit for our training program?
<i>Human Qualities</i>	Attention to detail	
	Creativity	Did they show creativity/their own unique characteristics in the personal statement
	Insightfulness	Is there evidence that the applicant has an accurate and deep understanding of what they wrote about
	Maturity	
	Motivation	Why has the applicant made the choices they have made in life and in medicine, drive to perform
	Professionalism	Is the information provided truthful, did they author the personal statement

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		themselves or is there evidence of plagiarism, did they put in the effort to write a good personal statement
	Resilience	How did the applicant handle adversity
	Social pathologies	Arrogance, conceited
	Thought processes	Reveals how applicant thinks about the topic they are writing about
	Work ethic	Does the applicant show that they will work hard
<i>Nothing</i>		No meaningful information obtained, PD does not pay attention to PS
<i>Characteristics defining a bad personal statement</i>		
<i>Demonstrates poor communication skills</i>	Poorly written	Bad grammar, disorganized, misspellings
	Too long	
<i>Important details are missing</i>	Goals	No mention of career goals or life goals or goals are vague and generic
	Unusual circumstances are not addressed	No explanation of poor performance, gaps in training, etc
	Lack of personal detail	Cookie cutter statements, generic statements, looks like everyone else's, stereotyped, no insight in the individual's goals/personality/history
	No explanation of events on life choices	Story or clinical case described with no explanation of how this event impacted direction of life/career
<i>Miscellaneous turnoffs</i>	Bad humor or sarcasm	
	Grandiose future plans	Unrealistic expectations from training, unrealistic career expectations (i.e. triple threat)

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	Hero story	Story about greatest ICU save
	Name dropping	
	Only interested in procedures	
	Osler/famous person quotes	
	Overblown expectations of what programs can offer	
	Sappy	Excessively sentimental or emotional
	Sensationalism	Exciting or shocking stories or language at the expense of accuracy, in order to provoke interest
<i>Reveals undesirable character traits</i>	Arrogant	Prideful
	Egocentric	Self-centered, self absorbed
	Exaggeration of accomplishments	Hyperbole
	Insincerity	Lack of authenticity, not genuine
	Lack of attention to detail	
	Lack of empathy	Inability to identify with feelings or thoughts of others
	Lack of insight	No evidence of accurate and deep understanding of the topic at hand
	Lack of professionalism	Bad mouthing others, profanity, plagiarism
	Worrisome work ethic	
<i>Superfluous content</i>	Contains irrelevant information	Stories with no connection to life choices, too long
	Regurgitates CV	
<i>Characteristics defining a good personal statement</i>		
<i>Allows reader to get to know applicant as a person</i>	Ability to work with others	Ability to work on a team
	Curiosity	
	Detail oriented	

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	Humility	Ability to acknowledge flaws, modesty
	Insightful/thoughtful	Evidence that the applicant is able to think deeply and accurately about something
	Interests outside of medicine	
	Sense of humor	
	Unique	Does the personal statement reflect the individual or look like most other statements
<i>Authentic Provides Detail Not Found Elsewhere in Application</i>	Interest in specialty	Genuine, honest Why choose PCCM/CCM?
	Defines career goals	Are they pursuing a career in academics, research, education, etc
	Describes fit with program	Why is applicant specifically looking at this fellowship program
	Explanation of gaps/problem areas Highlights/expands on achievements	
	Defines life goals	
	Describes preparation for specialty	What specific things have been done that will allow candidate to quickly adapt to fellowship
<i>Written Communication Skills</i>	Strong personal stories	
	Well written	Grammar, organization, flow, writing style
	Proficient in English language	If English is a second language, is the applicant able to engage in written communication
	Succinct	

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<i>Advice for Writing Personal Statements</i>		
<i>Global Advice</i>	Be Genuine	Sincere, honest, authentic, straightforward
	Be humble	
	Be insightful/thoughtful	
	Be original	
	Be positive	
	Be succinct	
	Do not stand out in a bad way	
	Make it personal	what makes the applicant who they are, what impactful experiences have they had in life, what makes them “tick”
<i>I do not provide advice</i>		Nobody asks, advice should not be needed, etc
<i>Specific things to include</i>	Career goals	What kind of career is applicant hoping for?
	Stories that make a point in the personal statement	Clinical interaction if it highlights values
	Why will you be good at this specialty?	
	Experiences outside of medicine	
	Explanation of gaps in training/problem spots	
	Weaknesses	Weaknesses/struggles and how they were overcome
	Why interested in this specialty	
	Expectations for fellowship	
<i>Things to Avoid</i>	Case reports	Case reports with no “point”; does not highlight anything specifically
	Drama	
	Embellishment	Exaggeration, making things sound more important than they are
	Poetry	
	Quotes from famous people	

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<i>Tips on Writing Process</i>	Allow time to do a good job
	Think about the message you want to deliver
	Proof read
	Ask someone who knows you well to read it