

Guidance notes for writing the personal statement

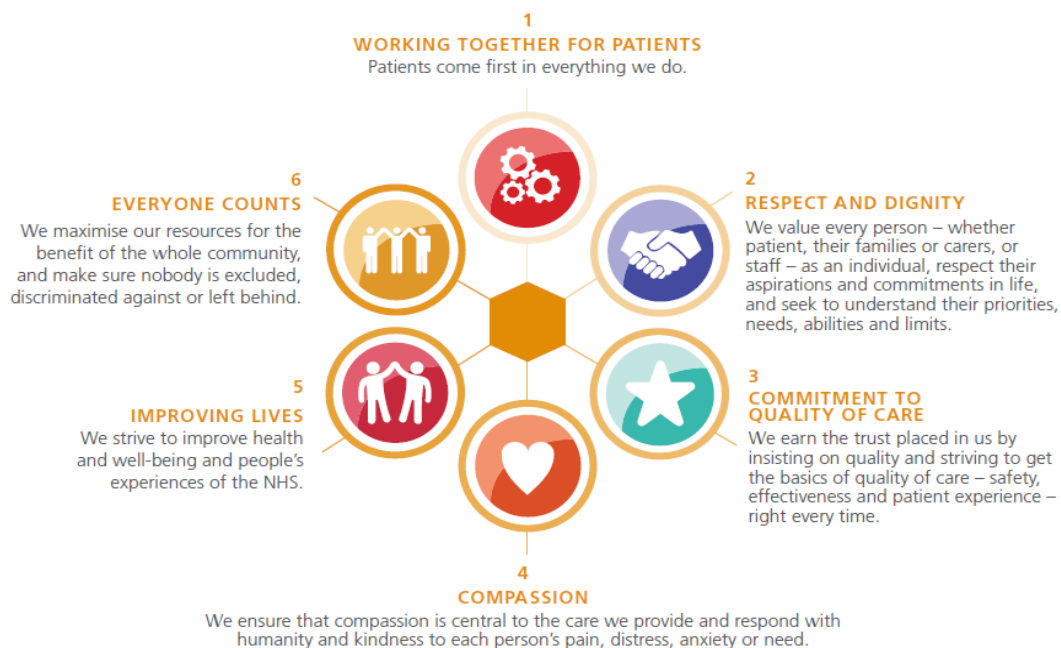
For 2026 entry, Keele will be using the UCAS personal statement as a component of the evidence for selection for home applicants.

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
a. Understanding of the roles of a doctor within the healthcare team, community and society, gained through your personal research and experiences	All
b. Awareness of the range of knowledge, skills and behaviours a medical student must acquire and why these are relevant to you	All
c. Evidence of a skill acquired through your school/college/university studies (as appropriate) that will be important for becoming a doctor	Commitment to quality of care
d. Ability to engage and communicate with people from a variety of backgrounds, and to help or support them	Respect & dignity Compassion Improving lives Everyone counts
e. Ability to balance responsibilities and time commitments over a prolonged period	Working together for patients Commitment to quality of care

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

For 2026 entry, the UCAS personal statement takes the form of three questions, each of which you should write statements in response to. These are:

1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?
2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you prepare for this course or subject?
3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

You have a total of 4,000 characters available and UCAS requires that you write a minimum of 350 characters in each section.

Please note that we expect your personal statement to focus on medicine as a course leading to professional registration as a doctor, and the emphasis must therefore be on demonstrating suitability for this role rather than simply an interest in the subject.

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 section, 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. You should include details of paid roles in the employment section of the UCAS application; this allows you to indicate the duration of the activity without having to use up words in the personal statement to do so. Observation/shadowing (see below) should not be included in the employment section.

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), and we will give equal credit for this criterion to research and experiences other than shadowing; 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/or taking away employment from local people; if you are required to spend long school/college vacations abroad to be with your extended family, 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
- 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. *Understanding of the roles of a doctor within the healthcare team, community and society, gained through your personal research and experiences*

Please note: experience in clinical settings (hospital or general practice) is not required or expected, and we will not give preference to applicants who have this. Please do not use up space explaining why you don't have experience in clinical settings. You should provide some indication of what you understand

about what a doctor's role involves, taking the NHS values into consideration. Please be specific about what research or experience has informed your understanding, and about the roles of a doctor that these have made you aware of. This may be based on in-person or virtual medical work experience, but may also be based on volunteering with institutions/charities that provide supplementary care or engagement with long-term support and advice programmes (including widening-participation programmes), discussion groups, school/college medical societies, etc., where these have given you the opportunity to listen and speak to doctors and medical school staff/students.

b. Awareness of the range of knowledge, skills and behaviours a medical student must acquire and why these are relevant to you

Alongside your understanding of the roles of a doctor, you should also write about the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are required for these and that you would expect to learn/develop while studying medicine. Using the General Medical Council's [Outcomes for Graduates](#) as a guide, reflect on how these are demonstrated by doctors and how they relate to your own knowledge, skills and behaviours.

c. Evidence of a skill acquired through your school/college/university studies (as appropriate) that will be important for becoming a doctor

Thinking about the studies you have undertaken at school/college (or beyond, if applying as a mature learner), please identify a particular skill you have developed that will be important in your progress towards becoming a doctor. You should be clear about what particular aspect of your studies has helped to develop this skill and why it will be important. Please don't list skills: you will get more credit for a thorough explanation of one than for a superficial description of several.

d. Ability to engage and communicate with people from a variety of backgrounds, and to help or support them

You should tell us about one or more experience(s) you have undertaken in which you engaged directly with people who had some need for help, support or care. Include details of how long you did this for (and how often), 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 You should include

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, cadets, 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.

details of how you communicated effectively with people who are different from you in some significant way, particularly where there were barriers to communication you had to make an effort to overcome. You should also include details of how the person or people you engaged with benefited from your participation.

Please be aware that experiences gained in any role that involves direct engagement with people – including paid part-time employment in public-facing roles – may be included as evidence for this criterion.

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.

e. *Ability to balance responsibilities and time commitments over a prolonged period*

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 or a specific responsibility within a team and should represent a commitment to ensuring the quality of the organisation or team is as high as possible. Roles within school/college/university 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.² 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.

We also 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.

There is no priority given to particular settings: credit is given for the role you took on and how you fulfilled it.

² When choosing a responsibility to write about, think about 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.

Weighting

Please note that neither the three questions within the UCAS form nor the five criteria above carry equal weight. More than half of the marks available will be accounted for by criteria *d* and *e*. These are most likely to be addressed in your answer to question 3, so it would be appropriate for you to write more in this section than in the other two. As criterion *c* is the only one likely to be addressed in your answer to question 2, it is likely that this will be the shortest section.

Reflection

For each criterion, please note the relevant NHS values in the table on page 2 and think about whether 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 and what attributes you have demonstrated, not why you think we should be impressed by it/them.

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/or patient safety and require us to contact the provider to investigate.

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, 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. Your personal statement must address the criteria above, and we will make no allowance for what your school/college or other advisers have guided you to write about if this doesn't address the criteria. 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.³ 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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³ Please be aware that a very large number of medicine applicants write about the same books, most of which have little relevance to their own experiences. This does not give a positive impression.