**Writing a Personal Statement for Graduate School**

**Purpose of a Personal Statement**

To persuade the admissions committee of the following.

* You are academically prepared;
* You have clear, well-developed goals;
* This program is a good match for your interests; and
* You are a thoughtful, motivated, and capable individual.

**Structure & Content of the Personal Statement**

**Introduction: Interest & Motivation**

* Begin with a compelling anecdote or insight that illustrates your passion.
* Briefly state what you want to study and why it matters to you.

**Academic & Professional Background**

* Describe your academic journey: major(s), key courses, projects, or papers.
* Mention any work experience, internships, or research that shaped your interests.
* Highlight specific skills relevant to the field, and, if possible, demonstrate these skills with evidence (awards, publications, special projects, success in jobs).

**Research or Creative Scholarly Interests & Career Goals**

* Clearly articulate your area(s) of interest.
* Mention any big questions or themes you want to explore.
* Explain your long-term goals—academic, professional, or both.

**Why This Program?**

* Reference specific faculty and their work; courses, or unique resources.
* Show that you’ve done your homework and that this program fits your goals.
* Avoid generic statements—be as specific as possible.

**Conclusion: Forward-Looking & Focused**

* Reiterate your enthusiasm and readiness.
* Leave the reader with a strong impression of your commitment and potential.

**Tips for Writing**

* **Tailor each statement** to the program. A one-size-fits-all essay weakens your application.
* **Be specific**: Use concrete examples, not vague claims.
* **Demonstrate, don’t just tell**: Instead of saying you’re passionate about X, describe the moment that your passion was sparked or the project that solidified that interest.
* **Be professional and sincere**: Avoid clichés and excessive flattery.
* **Proofread** carefully. Typos or awkward phrasing can undercut your message.

**Optional Additions**

* **Challenges Overcome**: Briefly and maturely discuss obstacles if relevant and show how they’ve prepared you.
* **Gaps or Switches in Field**: Address them honestly and positively.