Personal Statements for Postgraduate Study

Career Development Centre
At Maynooth University, the Career Development Centre provides a service that is student-focused, professional and informative. Whether you are visiting the help-desk to ask questions, attending our Career Talks or Employer presentations, helping yourself to Free take-away literature, using the computers in the Career Development Centre Information Room for assessment tests/careers work or talking with us in a one-to-one meeting, we are happy to assist you and work with you as you progress through the steps in discovering your career.
Part of making good decisions is having the information you need to make an informed decision.

- In our [Explore Careers](#) section you will find useful links and information on many career areas.
- Our [Information Sheets](#) provide information on careers about which we are often asked e.g. Graduate Entry Medicine, Social Work, Accounting, Law, Teaching, TEFL etc.
- You can access handouts from previous [Career Presentations](#) given by the Career Development Centre and visiting speakers.
- You will also find [Sample CVs](#) helpful in designing your CV.

Our [Career Videos](#) will assist in considering options with your degree, preparing for interviews and for assessment centres.
What is a personal statement?

- Part of the application process for postgraduate study
- An opportunity show you have commitment and qualifications to pursue the course of study
Why do course directors use Personal Statements?

• Help select applicants
• Generate questions for interview (where applicable)
• Clarify that you understand the nature of the course
Where to start?

• Be clear on what is required

• Some courses will give guidelines on writing a personal statement

• Word count, instructions, typed, specific information, evidence of experience?
Layout

• Have a beginning, middle and an end

• Plan structure of personal statement and divide it into paragraphs

• No blueprint for a perfect statement
Sections could include:

- Why you are applying to course/college
- Your academic qualifications and how they relate to the course
- Your personal qualities, skills, work experience and achievements that make you suitable for the course
- Conclusion
Back up statements with evidence

• If you enjoyed a particular module, clarify the aspects you enjoyed
• If you refer to particular experiences, say what you achieved and learned
• If you refer to interests and experiences outside college, outline the extent of your involvement
Answer these questions...

• Why that course?

• Why that college?

• Why you?
  – What will you bring to the course?
Why that course?

- Show your enthusiasm for the course
- Have you studied any modules, done any projects that are particularly relevant to this course?
- Where did your interest in this course come from?
  - Studying out of interest
  - Necessary step on your career path
  - Provide new opportunities not currently available to you (e.g. conversion courses)
Why that college?

• Research the college and school/dept – start with their website
• Show that you have researched the institution and the school/dept in which you wish to study
• Highlight why you would particularly value the opportunity to study there
Why you?

- What will you bring to the course?
- What academic skills/abilities do you have to offer?
- Relevance of your degree to this course?
- What are your strengths?
- What personal skills will you bring to the course?
  - Give examples e.g. Organisational skill, time-management, team-working, self-motivation
- If relevant point out any circumstances that have influenced your results to date – if you feel your results are not a reflection of your ability.
Sum up

• Final paragraph
  – just a few sentences to highlight your commitment to this course and your willingness to work hard to face challenges / meet goals etc
To help before you start writing...
Some things to consider...

- Brainstorm and research self-assessment
- [www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers/discover-your-career](http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers/discover-your-career) Step 1
  - Why did you choose this programme?
  - What are your core values and interests?
  - What got you to this point in your life? (events, people)
  - What are your past successes?
Know yourself ... How?

• Divide your **experience** into categories
  – Course (see module descriptions)
  – Employment (paid, unpaid, part-time, vacation)
  – Extra-curricular (clubs, volunteering, interests)

• Make a list of your **skills**
  – List one example (or more) of how you use this skill
What do you want them to know about you?

• What is distinctive about me? List some key attributes
• What learning influences shaped me? People, books, etc?
• What special courses, modules, skills would make me more successful in this programme?
• What challenges have I overcome in my academic, work or personal life?
• What are my career goals?
Documenting your Skills/Experience: Your Course

• Important to highlight relevant skills from your degree

• See Modules you have completed to date:  
  http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/undergraduatestudies/courses

• Module handouts/Course handbook – available from Department
Physics: Your skills

choose from » your skills  job options  career areas  further study  what next?  case studies

contacts and resources

Studying physics gives you a range of technical skills that relate to different areas such as astrophysics, particle physics, electromagnetism, quantum and classical mechanics, statistical physics and thermodynamics, wave phenomena and the properties of matter.

Physics courses also allow you to develop numerous transferable skills that are valued by employers. These include:

- a practical approach to problem solving, often using mathematical formulation and solution;
- the ability to reason clearly and to communicate complex ideas;
- IT and self-study skills;
- investigative and experimental skills.

Many employers are attracted to recruiting physics graduates because they have a good mix of technical skills, such as a high level of numeracy and mathematical modelling, together with research-related skills and good problem-solving and analytical skills, including data analysis and critical appraisal.

If you work on joint projects during your degree, emphasise your teamwork and presentation skills (including
Remember

• Get it proof read by someone else – we seldom see our own typos or grammatical/spelling errors
• Read it out loud
• Make it easy to read
• Be yourself – don’t plagiarise
Any Questions?

• [www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers](http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers)

• **Careers Centre Help-Desk**
  - Monday – Friday
  - 10am to 12.30pm & 2.30pm to 4.30pm

• [careers@nuim.ie](mailto:careers@nuim.ie) Personal Statement Review