



Northeastern University

**PreMed and PreHealth
Advising Program**

The Personal Statement

*A guide for medical, dental, podiatry, optometry,
physician assistant, and veterinary applicants*

Agenda



PURPOSE



PROMPTS



BRAINSTORMING



EXAMPLES & POINTERS



RESOURCES

Purpose



What is the purpose of the personal statement?

Learn

- Learn more about the applicant's background, personal and professional

Understand

- Understand motivations and goals in pursuing a future in healthcare

Allow

- Allow for creative expression that is absent elsewhere on the application

Bring

- Bring focus to one or more impactful moments

Tie

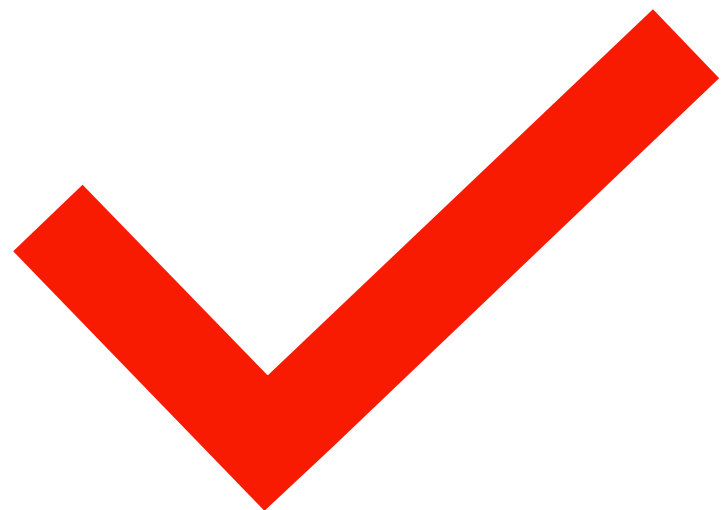
- Tie together varied pieces of a PreHealth journey into a coherent narrative



Personal
statements help
humanize your
application and
add perspective
!

Your application talks
about WHAT you did.

Your Personal Statement
tells us WHY you did it!



Prompts

Prompts & Character Limits by Application

AMCAS (MD)

- **Your Personal Statement.** You should use the space provided to explain why you want to become a doctor. (5,300 characters, including spaces)

AMCAS (MD/PhD)

- **In addition to your personal statement, MD/PhD applicants ALSO require two additional essays within their primary application (three essays total):**
 - An MD/PhD Essay to state your reasons for pursuing the combined MD/PhD degree. (3,000 characters)
 - A Significant Research Experience Essay that describes your significant research experiences. In this essay, you should specify your research supervisor's name and affiliation, the duration of the experience, the nature of the problem studied, and your contributions to the research effort. (10,000 characters)

AACOMAS (DO)

- **In the space provided write a brief statement expressing your motivation or desire to become a DO.** (5,300 characters, including spaces)
- Keep your statement general as the same essay will be sent to all schools you apply to.

ADEA AADSAS (Dental)

- **Your Personal Statement.** This a one-page essay that gives dental schools a clear picture of who you are and, most importantly, why you want to pursue a career in dentistry. (4,500 characters, including spaces)

Prompts & Character Limits by Application (cont.)

CASPA (PA)

- **Write a brief statement expressing why you are interested in being a Physician Assistant.** (5,000 character limit)

OPTOMCAS (Optometry)

- **Please describe what inspires your decision for becoming an optometrist, including your preparation for training in this profession, your aptitude and motivation, the basis for your interest in optometry, and your future career goals.** (4,500 characters)

VMCAS (Veterinary)

- **Your Personal Statement. A one-page essay that gives veterinary admissions committees a clear picture of who you are and, most importantly, why you want to pursue a career in veterinary medicine.** (3,000 characters)

AACPMAS (Podiatry)

- **Write a brief statement expressing why you are interested in becoming a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine. Provide information about your development for a career in Podiatric Medicine.** (4,500 characters)

Prompts & Character Limits – Texas Schools

TMDSAS (MD/DO)

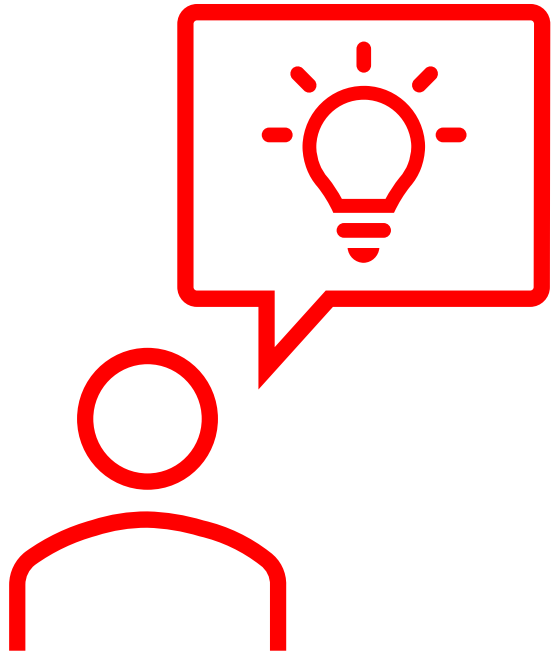
- **A personal essay to explain your motivation to seek a career in medicine. You are asked to include the value of your experiences that prepare you to be a physician.** (5,000 characters, including spaces)

TMDSAS (Dental)

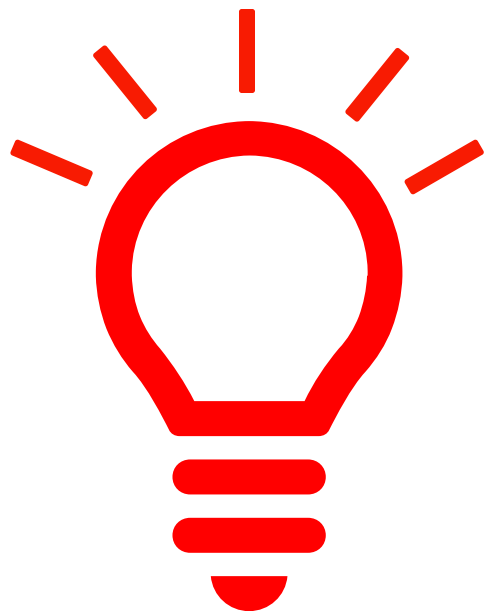
- **A personal essay to explain your motivation to seek a career in dentistry. You are asked to discuss your philosophy of the dental profession and indicate your goals relevant to the profession.** (5,000 characters, including spaces)

TMDSAS (Veterinary)

- **A personal essay to describe opportunities and challenges (veterinary-related and non-veterinary-related) you have experienced and how these have helped to prepare you to enter the veterinary profession.** (5,000 characters, including spaces)



Brainstorming



Activity:
Defining Moment

Respond:

- An experience that taught me something about myself was...
- A time I failed or struggled and what I learned from it...
- A patient or person who changed my perspective was...
- A moment when I realized I wanted to become a doctor was when...



Continue to Reflect

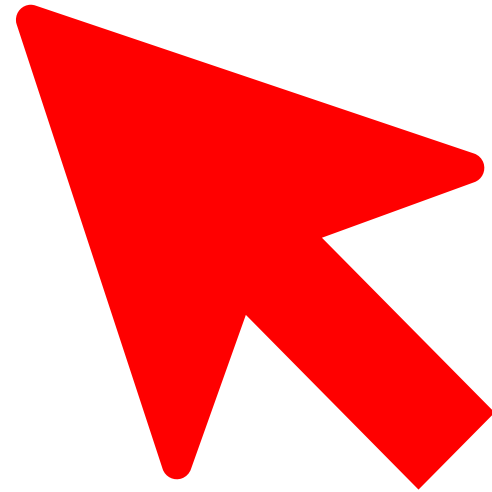
As you review your brainstorming, think about:

- What were the most common themes/connections I noticed?
- Do I believe that one of these themes represents my goals/motivations for my future profession?
- Will a statement focusing on this theme show an admissions committee who I am, why I am choosing to pursue this field, and how I have proven my commitment?

Reflection is something that you will be doing constantly throughout the application cycle

- Consider keeping a journal to record memorable events
- Talk through your journey with friends/family/mentors to see a different point of view
- Review [AAMC Core Competencies](#) to help connect your experiences to your profession of choice

Examples & Pointers



Two Common Narrative Approaches to Consider

The Journey

- Begins with a hook, then switches to a slower buildup of several experiences
- Usually includes two to three anecdotes that follow a singular theme
- Conclusion drives home several ideas:
 - Why is the path before you the only one that makes sense for your goals?
 - What is your ideology on your chosen profession (i.e. what do you see as its role in the world, and how do you plan on contributing?)
 - Final statement of theme

The Deep Dive

- Totally focused on one anecdote
- Still adheres to a central theme
- Breaks down event and explains impacts/outcomes/lessons learned
- Conclusion pulls anecdote into the present:
 - How did this experience help you arrive to where you are today?
 - How has it solidified your motivation to enter your chosen profession?
 - Final mention of theme

A Note on AI

**** AI can be a good tool to help you brainstorm themes or assist with grammar, but it **SHOULD NOT** be writing the essay for you! ****

- AAMC Applicant Guide
 - "You may use artificial intelligence tools for brainstorming, proofreading, or editing your essays. However, it's essential to ensure that the final submission reflects your own work and accurately represents your experiences." [Page 65 of AAMC Applicant Guide](#)
- Individual School Attestations

Things to Avoid

**Generic,
interchangeable examples**

**Too many external
quotes to where your own
voice is drowned out**

**A focus on the negative or
complaining about a
job/supervisor**

**An attempt to cover your
entire resume**

**Leaving items open to
misinterpretation, being
unclear**

**Boasting or labeling
yourself in over-laudatory
terms**

**Forgetting to address the
main question at hand**

Common clichés

Reminders

This is a personal essay – **be personal!**

Aim for an organized essay that flows from paragraph to paragraph and is anchored to a central theme

Use direct, active language – help the reader see through your eyes instead of feeling distant

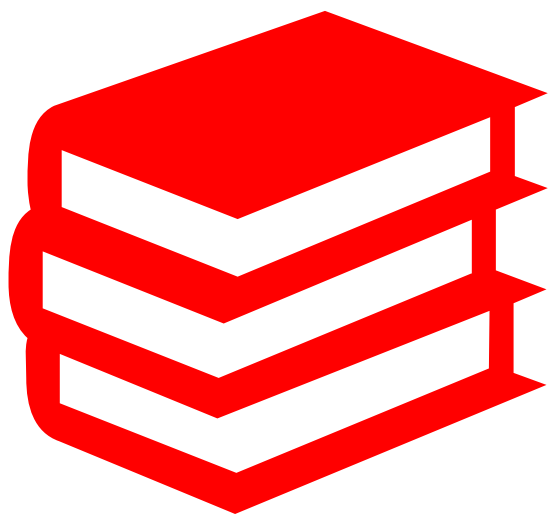
Write from first person point-of-view, using the first-person pronoun "I"

Ensure there are **no grammatical errors**

Applications don't allow varied formats, such as bold or italics. Ensure you are happy with how it looks as plain text

Sensitive Information

- Consider the following before including:
 - Is it an important part of your journey to your chosen profession?
 - What did it teach you about yourself?
 - How is it related to your future practice as a healthcare professional?
 - How will this be perceived by a diverse audience?
 - Is this pertinent to now? Could it be saved for an interview or a conversation after I'm on campus?



Resources

Personal Statement Workbook

- Self-guided workbook
- Composed of 3 parts to help with:
 - **Brainstorming**
 - **Outlining**
 - **Drafting**
- Can be found on the PMPH website under "Applicant FAQ"

Mission Statement Exercise

Brainstorming Activity

- In a document or on a piece of paper, write down what impact you hope to have as a healthcare provider. Then, reflect on why it is important to you to have that impact. Identify experiences you've had that show why that impact was/is important to you.

Additional Brainstorming Questions

- What was the most rewarding academic work you did and why? How did this work help you prepare for your chosen career?
- What was the most rewarding non-academic experience you had and why? How did this experience help you prepare for your chosen career?
- Which experience(s) have given you the most insight about your chosen profession and why?
- What aspects of health care are most exciting to you right now?
- What aspects of the health care system would you like to work toward improving?

Support from your PreHealth Advisor

Your PreHealth Advisor is a valuable resource as you draft your personal statement!

Your PreHealth Advisor will review your Personal Statement with you during (NOT BEFORE) your Application Readiness Meeting (ARM).

Based on your stage in the writing process, your advisor will make one of the following recommendations in your ARM:

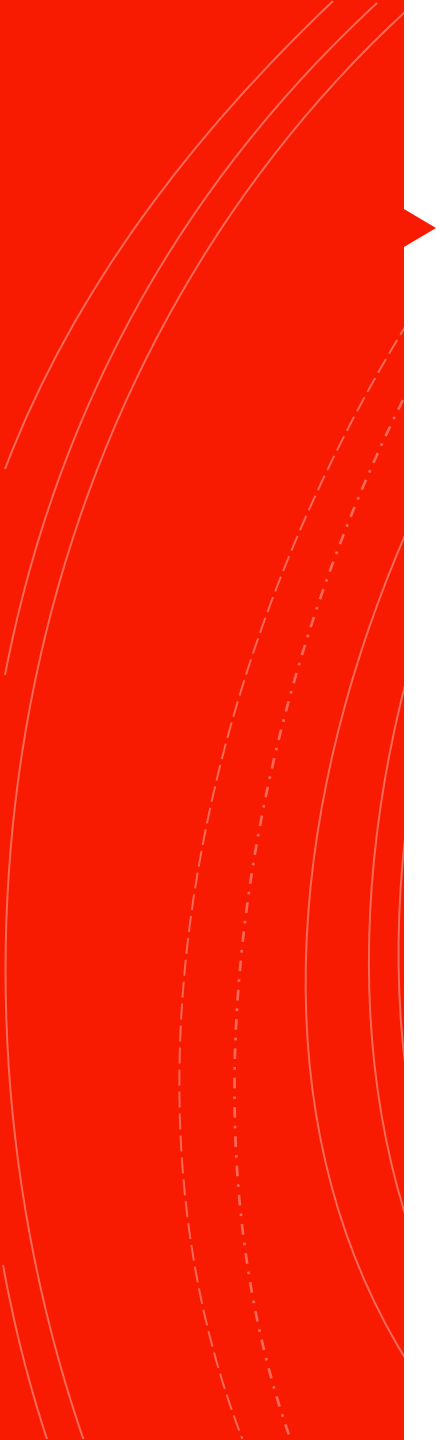
No Additional Follow-Up Required.

Almost there! Take our feedback to the Writing Center to finalize your essay!

Significant Edits are needed. Work with the Writing Center and send us a final draft for review.

Feedback from Others

- Seeking feedback is a part of every writing process – being open to criticism and review is a sign of strength and will lead to a more solid statement... but don't let your own voice be silenced! *Avoid asking for too many opinions!*
- Who should you ask?
 - People who know you personally (does it sound like *me?*)
 - People who know you professionally (what did you *learn* about me?)
 - Your PreHealth Advisor (how might this be *interpreted* by admissions committees?)



Additional Resources

- [7 Tips for Writing Your AMCAS Personal Comments Essay](#)
- [ADEA AADSAS Personal Statement Tips](#)
- [New England College of Optometry: How to write a wicked awesome personal statement](#)
- [Do's and Don'ts for Writing a Strong CASPA Personal Statement](#)

The Writing Center



THE WRITING CENTER

About the Writing Center:

- Free one-on-one writing support for Northeastern students, staff, faculty, and alumni
- In-person appointments Monday thru Friday in 412 Holmes
- Online appointments every day (including evenings and weekends!)
- Summer appointments are online only; we also close briefly between each term



THE WRITING CENTER

What happens during a Writing Center appointment?

- You'll meet with a friendly & knowledgeable tutor for about 45 minutes.
 - These are *collaborative* meetings where you get to set the agenda or priorities. Your tutor will offer ideas and advice, but they won't simply edit your statement for you (we're not a proofreading service). Instead, they'll work *with* you to help you capture your ideas or elevate your phrasing.
- Tutors are UG, MA, and PhD students. You can check out their bios [online](#).



THE WRITING CENTER

When's a good time to make an appointment?

- You need help brainstorming and figuring out what you want to say in your PS for the Mock Application
- You have specific questions or concerns about how to present your PS (using direct, personal language; organizing the statement; maintaining a consistent narrative)
- You're encouraged by your pre-med/health advisor to review ideas, structure, grammar, etc. at the Writing Center ***after your Application Readiness Meeting***

Keep in mind: writing and revising takes time
Most writers have multiple sessions for the same personal statement



THE WRITING CENTER

To make an appointment:

Step 1: Visit the Writing Center site: <https://cssh.northeastern.edu/writingcenter/>

Click “Book an Appointment” and then log in with your regular Northeastern credentials. If it’s your first time visiting the Writing Center, you’ll need to first fill out an account registration form.

Step 2: View our appointment schedule & make an appointment.

White boxes = open appointments that you can book. Please make sure to choose a consultant with the modality that you want (in person vs. online).



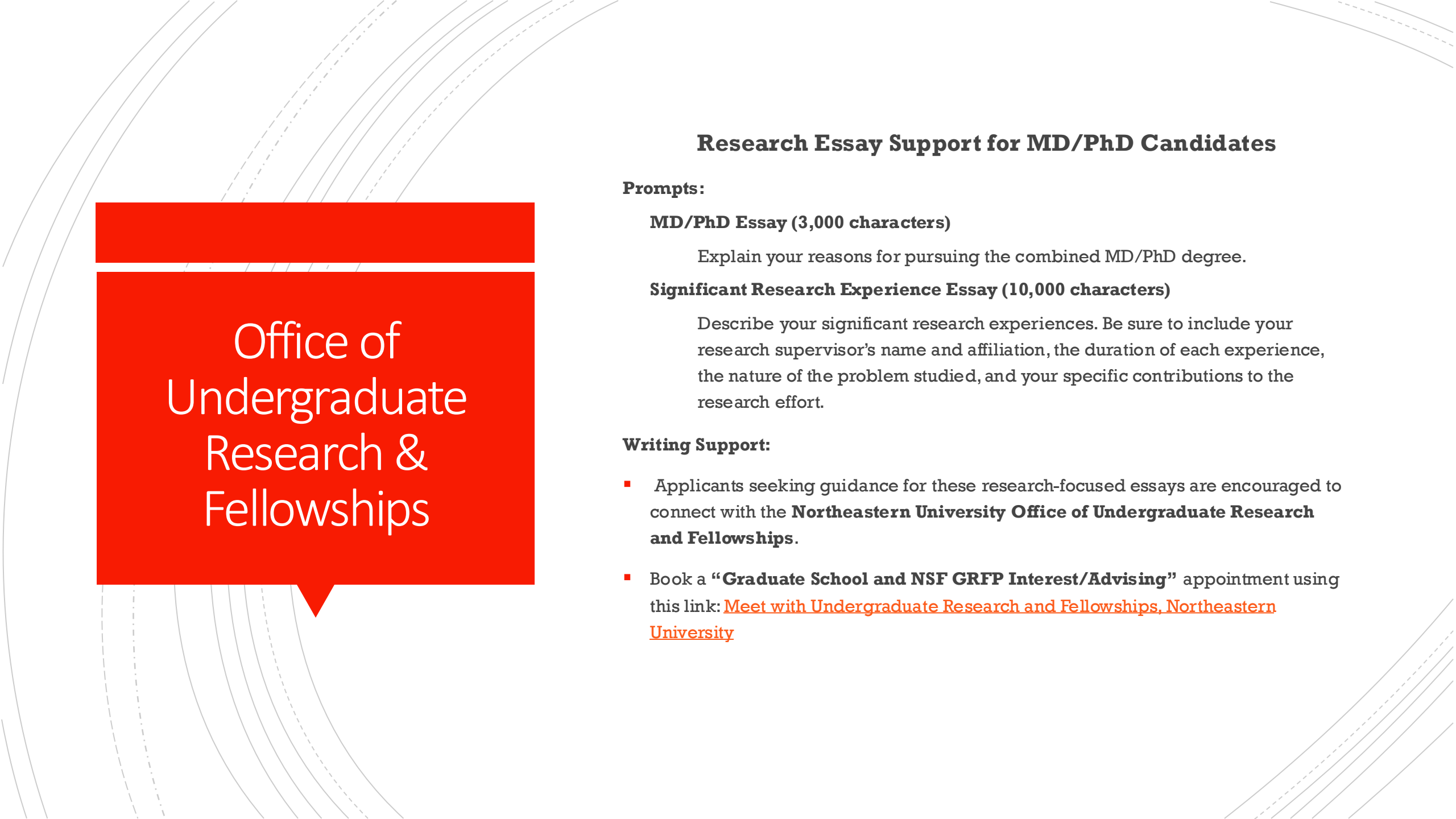
THE WRITING CENTER

Any questions?

Email writingcenter@northeastern.edu

We look forward to supporting you in your
personal statement writing journey!





Office of Undergraduate Research & Fellowships

Research Essay Support for MD/PhD Candidates

Prompts:

MD/PhD Essay (3,000 characters)

Explain your reasons for pursuing the combined MD/PhD degree.

Significant Research Experience Essay (10,000 characters)

Describe your significant research experiences. Be sure to include your research supervisor's name and affiliation, the duration of each experience, the nature of the problem studied, and your specific contributions to the research effort.

Writing Support:

- Applicants seeking guidance for these research-focused essays are encouraged to connect with the **Northeastern University Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships**.
- Book a “**Graduate School and NSF GRFP Interest/Advising**” appointment using this link: [Meet with Undergraduate Research and Fellowships, Northeastern University](#)

Next Steps

Jump In!

Start Writing Early

- Even if you are focusing the majority of your time preparing for the MCAT or working, spend a day or two brainstorming and getting your thoughts down. You can revisit them later.

Consider building writing into your schedule

- Add blocks of time into your calendar for additional brainstorming, writing your first draft, making major edits, etc.
- Set personal goals and deadlines for yourself

Refine

Scan for Errors

- Do not rely on spellcheck!
- Read and re-read your writing

Share your statement with others

- This can help catch any errors you may've missed
- Use sharing as an opportunity to ensure YOUR voice is present

Read your work out loud to listen for flow or identify awkward areas

Finalize

Step Back

- Take a short break, then re-read your statement with fresh eyes
- Ask yourself if this is authentic to who you are

Polish and Save

- Double check formatting, character counts, and prompt requirements
- Save a clean, final copy and back it up somewhere safe!



Questions