

Tips for Writing the “Personal Statement” of Your BASW Application

1. Address **all** Components of Parts I and II. The Personal Statement has two parts. Each part can be broken into several areas that you need to discuss. Make sure you fully discuss each part.
2. Balance the Personal with the Professional. For example, it is appropriate to discuss personal challenges that you have experienced. However, these challenges should be used, for example, to demonstrate how they increased your knowledge or skills, or as a basis for understanding your motivation and commitment to the Social Work program and profession.
3. In thinking about your life experiences and attitudes that have shaped your interest in the Social Work profession (Part I), you might consider such questions as:
 - Who has most influenced my choice of the profession? How did they influence my choice?
 - What life events, both positive and negative, have influenced my choice of the profession? What did I learn from these experiences?
 - How have my experiences with persons who are different from me (by color, gender, sexual orientation, age, belief systems, etc) influenced my choice of the profession?
 - How have my paid or volunteer experiences influenced my choice of the profession? What important lessons about a choice of Social Work as a career did I learn from these experiences?
 - Using the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers and its Preamble (provided at their website <http://www.naswdc.org/pubs/code/code.asp>), how are your values consistent with the Code? Avoid simply stating that “my values are consistent with the Code of Ethics” ...tell the readers HOW they are reflected in your experiences or world-view and choice of the profession.
4. In thinking about material that you might include in Part II of the Essay, consider such questions as:
 - Why am I applying to the University of Iowa School of Social Work instead of many other programs in Social Work? What “fit” do I think I have with the BASW program at Iowa? (Consider looking at the School's website if you don't feel adequate in addressing this question: www.uiowa.edu/~socialwk).
 - What are my strengths and in what areas do I hope to grow as a student in this Program?
 - What issues or experiences have I experienced (or are currently experiencing) that may affect my choice of the profession and/or ability to complete the degree requirements?
 - What are my short term and long term goals as a professional social worker? Do I have special interests in working with a particular problem (such as homelessness, violence, substance abuse, etc) or with a particular population (youth, the elderly, etc.)? How do these interests influence my choice of goals?
5. Because of the page limit of the Personal Essay (3-5 pages, double spaced), be selective in the material you present. Obviously you cannot respond to every question posed in #3 and #4 (previous page); they are questions to ponder as you reflect on what material you will write about to satisfy Part I and Part II of the Essay.
6. No Bad Grammar Please. The Essay will be used to evaluate your written communication skill. Make sure your grammar and spelling are correct. Use topic sentences to begin paragraphs. If you have difficulty with your writing skills, get help from a Writing Lab on-campus. These skills are important not only in writing your Personal Essay: they will be invaluable as you write papers for your Social Work courses and as you write reports in the future as a professional Social Worker.
7. Get feedback. Ask someone to read the criteria for the Personal Statement, read your personal statement, and give you critical feedback about its organization and content. Because members of the Admission Committee cannot read and give you feedback about your Essay in advance of your submitting it, other possible feedback might be obtained from other social workers with whom you might have contact in your volunteer placement etc.
8. Do not wait until the night before it's due to write this essay! Give yourself time to reflect on the point you want to make. Seek information that you need from books, websites, etc. Write a draft. Sleep on it. Re-write the draft as a polished product. Get feedback. Re-write as necessary to improve the organization or content of the paper.
9. **All admission materials are due on March 1. Late submissions will not be considered.**