



sources before contacting the application service enables the people at the application services to handle issues that require clarification and/or special problems that may arise.

Official transcripts are required before or after submission of the application, depending on the health profession. Knowing when transcripts are needed is important, and you should plan accordingly so that your transcript(s) are received in a timely manner. Application services—and often individual schools—will perform an item-by-item check, comparing all courses in the academic record section of your application against your official transcript; thus, you should review your transcript(s) prior to submitting it to check for errors. Also, application services may recalculate your GPA in order to standardize GPAs across colleges and universities. What they calculate may be lower than that on your transcript because, for example, any grade of A+ is changed to an A. The application is copied after grades are verified and sent to all the schools you designate. If you decide to apply to additional schools before the application deadline, you need to submit an additional designation form with the appropriate fees, and your application will be forwarded to those schools.

When you have completed the forms and have checked carefully for errors, submit your materials to the application service, which then verifies and reproduces your application and forwards it to each school you have designated.

All application services require a basic processing fee, plus additional fees based on the number of schools to which you request the application be sent. Fee reductions or waivers may be available to students with documented financial need. Check online with the respective application service regarding fee assistance.

Be sure to retain copies of all materials that you submit as part of the application process. It is also a good idea to retain draft material, because information you leave out of your personal statement may be worthy of inclusion in response to questions on the secondary application (see below). Submit your application early, because most schools have a rolling acceptance system; that is, the admissions committee acts on the application once it is complete in all its parts, including secondaries, letters of evaluation, and interview. Even schools without rolling admission have a limited number of interview slots available to candidates, so applying early best enhances your potential to receive an invitation to interview.

### **Personal statement or essay**

Most application forms require an essay. For many students, this is the most difficult and challenging part of the application process. Your personal statement should be personal. There is no universal formula. Your essay may explore a variety of topics: your personal journey toward your chosen career; important experiences and what you learned from them; the special strengths you feel you offer the profession; your goals for your education and career; how you will contribute to the diversity of your class.

Anecdotes and stories from your personal experience are often more effective than declarative statements, such as: “I am compassionate” or “I have been a leader.” A well-written passage about delivering meals to an elderly home-bound person may communicate more about you as a person than simply listing such qualities as compassion, empathy, understanding, and a sense of humor. Also,



it is wise to limit the number of experiences you choose to write about. Trying to cover all of your accomplishments in one short essay usually results in a “resume in prose form,” which adds very little to the material about you already submitted.

If you have anything in your background that you feel needs to be explained, include it in your personal statement. If you missed a year because of illness or family problems, or had a difficult semester because your work schedule was too heavy, discuss it here. On the other hand, do not feel compelled to discuss the only “C” you got, as this will just call attention to it. Make any explanation as positive as possible, stressing what you have learned from the experience. Take responsibility for your actions; excuses create a negative impression. Do not exaggerate. Do not compromise your credibility. Could it be that you are a stronger candidate because you have been through this experience? Ask yourself, as many interviewers will ask, “How did it affect me? How did I grow from this experience?” If you are uncertain about the viability of discussing a certain academic or personal issue, speak with your advisor about it; often describing the situation to an advisor helps to clarify whether or not it is a topic worth discussing in the limited, very valuable space of the personal essay.

In general, you should obtain critical feedback about your essay from people whose judgment you trust. Ask a peer and/or an advisor to review your application, particularly those parts that require essays or other extensive text, before you submit it. It never hurts to get another opinion. You may choose to purchase a copy of *Write for Success* from NAAHP, through its website [naahp.org](http://naahp.org).

When you are interviewed, the interviewer likely will have read your personal statement and your responses on the supplemental application material. Thus, anything you choose to write about should also be something that you feel comfortable discussing. Make sure you save a copy of your application, including your essay; re-read the essay prior to an interview. You may choose to purchase the brief brochure, *Interviewing for Health Professions Schools*, through the NAAHP website at [naahp.org](http://naahp.org).

#### STUDENT REFLECTION QUESTIONS: THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

1. *What concerns do you have about the writing your personal statement/essay? What resources are available to help you tackle these concerns?*
2. *List five words that the following people would use to describe you: a) your professors; b) your friends; c) yourself. Brainstorm experiences that best exemplify these descriptors.*
3. *How have your experiences informed your decision to follow this career path and/or shaped that path?*
4. *How have you grown as a professional over the last four years? What experiences have supported that growth?*
5. *What do you hope to accomplish through being a member of your chosen profession?*
6. *What does it mean to you to “help others”?*
7. *What experiences best show your passion for helping others (consider experiences outside your field of interest also)?*
8. *What makes you unique (consider personal attributes but also experiences/activities that may help you stand out among applicants)?*