

Guidance for Scholarship Applicants:
What makes a good personal statement?

It is worth acknowledging that this is a critical question for our scholarship applicants: ‘*What makes a good personal statement?*’

The answer can be split into two parts:

- *Firstly, let us run through the **basics**, not to insult your intelligence, but because we all need to be regularly reminded of these, as we are occasionally prone to forget them.*
- *Secondly, we shall address what ought to be covered in the **content** of your personal statement.*

GUIDANCE

1. **Make use of all your allocated number of words:** To start with, notice in the personal statement section of your application, there is an open field that permits you to **enter up to a thousand words**. While you do not necessarily need use all of your thousand words, we would suggest that you use up as much of your quota of words as possible. An unduly short application is likely to be held against you as it indicates a lack serious engagement with the application process.
2. **Get to the point:** Following on from the previous point, the imperative to utilise the allocated number of words is **not an invitation to waffle** through your personal statement. Everything you write ought to be substantive. What we would suggest is at the end of every paragraph you pen, ask yourself the question: can I refer this back to the thematic criteria?
3. **Get it Proofread:** It is important to stress that once you have drafted your Personal Statement, you ought to **seek out someone else to proof read it**, such as a parent, or a trusted friend, for example. We would suggest that you take your time over writing it, even if this may involve multiple drafts and revisions. Going through this process, you tend to lose any critical distance you may have had in relation to your work. Hence, a proof reader will spot things you just cannot see. So, it may be useful to approach it like writing an undergraduate essay by adopting the same frame of mind. Please also note

that an **incoherent structure, grammatical mistakes, typos and incorrect spelling** communicates to us a rushed job and an insufficient level of diligence taken.

4. **Content – thematic criteria:** You will need to directly address how the course and the career progression it will help realise, as well as your wider vision, will benefit British Muslim communities.
 - a. To start with, **the course that you intend to study ought to be aligned with your vision.** In other words, there should be no mismatch between the course and your future aspirations. For instance, if you want to study a journalism course, clearly it would be odd if you go on to elaborate on your aspirations to become a barrister.
 - b. You will also need to demonstrate a **clear link between your aspirations and how this will benefit British Muslim communities.** This could include referencing your direct engagement with these communities, or, if you have no such engagement, you may wish to detail how your **contribution to wider society** may indirectly benefit these demographics. For example, you may already be making considerable impact in your chosen field or industry by transforming attitudes and perceptions of British Muslims in spaces where they are sorely under represented. And needless to say, contributing to British Muslim communities and wider society are not mutually exclusive.
 - c. To conclude this point, please note that we are looking for applicants to demonstrate how they will be making an **impact on communities in this country.** You may be involved in work overseas, and perhaps you wish to reference such work - which is perfectly fine - as long as these are either incidental to your goals and aspirations to give back to communities here, or you convincingly make the case that you are able to apply your skills as effectively **within a UK context.**
5. **Content – referring to your experience**
 - a. While it is necessary to mention your aspirations in your application, your statement should **not be purely aspirational.**

- b. Please do make reference to your **professional work experience**, as well as any relevant volunteering and extra-curricular activities you have already undertaken. Any evidence of **engagement with British Muslim communities** or civil society organisations is very welcome.
- c. For those of you who might retort that you are **still an undergraduate student** and have no relevant work experience, please detail your engagement with student societies, the student union, any student lead campaigns, widening participation initiatives and so forth.
- d. Where your interest may be **academic and research orientated**, or where, perhaps, practical experience is lacking, please refer to key topics of study in your academic field and any relevant literature; essays you have written or modules you may have taken. Furthermore, refer to any organisations or institutions that are conducting notable work within your industry, and how these may shape your future career prospects. In short, communicate to us **your insight and knowledge** in your area of interest.

CONTACT

Good luck with your application. If you have any queries about the application process or you are uncertain about anything whatsoever, do feel free to direct emails to scholarships@azizfoundation.org.uk.