

Nuffield Research Placements – Guidance for Applicants

We often get asked what makes a good application. Below are some hints and tips, together with a short activity to get you thinking about how to prepare an application for a Nuffield Research Placement.

When applying for a job or a place on a course, writing about your experiences and interests on the application form is the first opportunity you have to introduce yourself to the recruiter or admissions tutor. Remember, the person reading the form doesn't know you so it's important to explain your interests and ideas clearly and concisely. You don't want them to become bored reading through a long-winded life history but, equally, your statement shouldn't be so brief that the reader feels that you haven't been bothered enough to give sufficient detail. Try to strike a balance between getting across your key message without resorting to unnecessary waffle.

If you're applying for a Nuffield Research Placement, it doesn't matter if you don't have any experience - that's what the Nuffield project is for! At this stage all you need is enthusiasm for your subject.

Key Points to Consider

The local Nuffield Coordinator is responsible for selecting students for placements in their region. Remember that, unlike your tutors, they have no knowledge about your potential for the programme other than what you include in your application. The personal statement is your opportunity to showcase yourself and demonstrate your suitability for a placement.

Generally speaking, there are three main areas which the coordinators are looking for in a 'good' application:

1. A convincing account of why you want to undertake a placement and what you hope to gain from the Nuffield experience
2. Information about the subjects that interest you and why you enjoy them
3. A description of the qualities and skills you can bring to a placement which will help you to be successful

Hints and Tips

- Use **full English** and check your **spelling** and **grammar** - remember, this is your first chance to impress the Nuffield Coordinator
- Try to be concise in your personal statement. We recommend keeping the statement within **500 words**
- **Think** about what you want to say before you fill in the form - don't just put down the first think that comes into your head. If it helps, you can write down notes or ideas on a draft version first

- **Make the most** of your **interests** and **experiences**. If you did really well in a school competition, say so! If you've done something science-y (like visited a museum or read an article) in your spare time, put it in
- Before submitting your application, **check it carefully** for any mistakes - it's always a good idea to ask a friend, family member or teacher to proof read what you've written

Personal Statement Activity

Look at the applications below and think about three positive and three negative things about each form.

Example One

Explain below why you think you would benefit from a Nuffield Research Placement. You might mention for example whether there are any particular areas of science that interest you, what your career plans are and any previous experience you have had which might be relevant.

I like science and want to find out more about doing science at university. At school I like learning about genetics in biology so I want to see what it's like to work in this area. At school I find experiments really interesting, and so I would like to see what it's like to do research for real. After school I want to get a job in science if I like what I do at uni.

Example Two

Explain below why you think you would benefit from a Nuffield Research Placement. You might mention for example whether there are any particular areas of science that interest you, what your career plans are and any previous experience you have had which might be relevant.

I think that I'm interested in Chemistry and might like to do it at university, but I probably want a career in Finance in the end. Maybe the placement will help me decide what I want to do. At school, I go to the science club and I like that, which is why I have applied for this placement.

Application One

Positive points

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Negative points

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Application Two

Positive points

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Negative points

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Supplementary Questions

- Who is going to read your application; how might this affect your choice of language?
- What style of writing is appropriate for this task?
- What words or phrases could you use to demonstrate your enthusiasm?
- How would you make your application different for the two examples provided?

Having answered these questions, have a go at writing your own personal statement. Compare your work to the two examples and think about the following:

- Which do you prefer and why?
- Are there any sections of your statement that stand out better than others?
- Is there anything which needs to be removed or added to your statement?