



GUIDELINES ON

PERSONAL ESSAY

Some MPP candidates confide to FSPPM Admission Board that they have difficulties composing the personal essay for their application package. Some haven't started writing while some are facing the overflow of idea and struggle to put these ideas into structure. Some even suggest Fulbright School to post sample essay for their reference.

Believe it or not, members of Admission Board have been 'in your shoes' and thus sympathetic with your challenges. Below we outline some recommendations which we hope to answer some of your queries and help you to have a smoother composition process.

First of all, it must be stated outright that there is no fixed template for personal essay. Personal essay is a heart-to-heart piece of writing with the sole aim of helping us to form a comprehensive and insightful understanding of you as a candidate to MPP Program. As a result, your essay must reflect your concerns, desires and commitments. A truthful essay which is written with your heart is certainly persuasive and make a significant impressive to readers.

Despite lacking a fixed framework, you must keep in mind and answer the application questions in your essay. In your response to the first question, for example, about "the reasons why you want to participate in MPP Program at Fulbright School", you should focus on most critical reasons motivating you to apply into the program instead of digressing over a bunch of reasons. The more reasons you share, the less important each becomes. Moreover, there is word limit to your essay, preventing you from covering too much details.

For the next question, if you apply into MPP Leadership & Management concentration, you should share your practical experiences in a specific policy issue confronted in your work or life. Or if you apply into MPP Policy Analysis concentration, in the second question about "a policy issue in a specific field/sector", you should focus on a policy issue of your concern, clearly state your opinion and analysis on the issue.

Throughout your essay, at appropriate places, you should share your real experiences in work or life. This, in part, helps us to form a vivid and candid visualization about you. On the other hand, this personalizes the essay and make it more interesting to read. However, these experiences should not be arranged into a mechanical list of achievements or events; achievements and events are hollow, impersonal and could not help us understand their significance to you.

Lastly, you should be wary of some common errors in personal essays, including rambling introduction which does not go straight to the point, weak cohesion among paragraphs, failure to highlight and emphasize the spirit and focus of the essay. Another mistake, though less common yet worth mentioning, is the requirement to observe word limit restriction. For personal essays, writing in a few words is more challenging than in long paragraphs. Hence, the word limit is intentional to motivate your careful consideration for any ideas and sentences included in the essay so that the final output is succinct and precise.

We hope these brief suggestions somehow help you in writing your personal essay. We wish you good luck in your application and look forward to seeing you in Fulbright campus this Fall!