

KENNEDY SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION: CRAFTING A STRONG PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your personal statement is an opportunity to convey to the Kennedy Trustees a deeper understanding of who you are, your background, your experiences, and your goals than is possible from an application form alone. It is your opportunity to make the strongest case you can for why you wish to undertake further study at Harvard and/or MIT as a Kennedy Scholar, how doing so fits into your personal and professional trajectory, and how you will have a positive impact on society more widely as a result.

The aim here is not to write out your CV as a series of disconnected points, but to provide an integrated and coherent narrative about your intellectual, professional, and personal profile. Think about the ideas that animate you and the problems you're trying to solve. Why do these ideas interest you? In what ways have you pursued them to date? What skills and experiences do you have that make you a good candidate for further study? You should not feel it is inappropriate to discuss difficult circumstances or challenges you have faced in your personal, educational or professional journey so far. Indeed, "ability to overcome adversity" is one of the dimensions the Trustees consider in evaluating applications, as indicated in the Call for Applications. (The application process is of course confidential, but if you have any questions or concerns about sharing such experiences in your personal statement, you are welcome to contact the Director to discuss ahead of submitting your application.)

You should make a case *both* for the particular programme you're applying for at Harvard/MIT, and also for the Kennedy Scholarship. The statement should thus have an academic component, explaining your academic interests and demonstrating that you have thoroughly researched your intended programme at Harvard/MIT. All applicants are asked to make clear *why their proposed course in the US is particularly suitable*. What makes your proposed course unique? Are there similar courses available in the UK and why is the US course preferable? You may wish to reference academics you would like to work with or classes you hope to take. You may be able to use material from your application essay to Harvard/MIT in this regard, but you should keep in mind the different audiences you are addressing. The Kennedy Trustees who will evaluate your scholarship application reflect a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds and professional interests, so it can be helpful to frame your research interests so as to make the wider significance clear.

With regard to making a case for the Kennedy Scholarship, your academic performance and potential is a significant component of the Trustees' evaluation, but they are also concerned with your wider interests and future aims within and beyond academia. As noted in the Call for Applications, they particularly welcome applications from individuals with a **strong public service ethos**. The Trustees conceive of public service **in a broad sense** – it need not simply mean an intention to work in government or seek elected office, though these can be examples of public service. They recognise that there are many ways to make a larger difference to society, and they are interested in the ways you may hope to contribute to local, national, or global communities through your academic research, voluntary activities, or future career.

Those who are re-applying for a Kennedy Scholarship are asked to make clear the ways in which their application differs from any previous submissions: i.e. in what ways is your application stronger than the last time you applied? Have you undertaken new academic or professional experiences which have enhanced your potential as a graduate student, or have given you a clearer focus in terms of your future impact?

This is a relatively short statement (a **maximum** of 1,000 words), in which you have to cover a lot of ground. Ask yourself if the ideas flow well from one section to the next, if you've covered all the key points and integrated them well together. You might want to ask a friend or colleague to read it and seek feedback on the cohesion and flow. Above all, take the time you need to craft a polished piece of writing – the best personal statements have usually been edited several times. The personal statement is a crucial part of the application process and a chance to make a positive and distinctive impression. Make sure to invest the time to give yourself the best chance of success.