



Applying to ITT: Tips for maths candidates

Having decided to apply to an initial teacher training (ITT) course, you will need to submit a written application and attend an interview. An ITT assessment interview will be awarded on the quality of your application, an extremely important element of which is your personal statement.

What is a personal statement?

It is your opportunity to stand out from all other maths applicants. It is important that you convey **why** you want to teach maths, **what** you can offer, and **why** you will make a good maths teacher. You will need to explain **how** you know that teaching is right for you, and **in what way** the school-based experience you have had confirms this.

What the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications says:

Does your university mathematics department offer an undergraduate ambassadors scheme or other relevant opportunities? If so how did this develop or confirm your desire to teach mathematics.

Your personal statement must demonstrate that you have:

- A strong commitment to becoming a teacher
 - Be enthusiastic about your subject and show that you want to share this enthusiasm with pupils
 - Identify specific reasons for wanting to become a teacher
 - Demonstrate a desire to work with young people

What the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications says:

*Which areas of mathematics have you most enjoyed?
Have you had any experience of teaching or helping others with their maths?
Have you taken part in any mathematics education outreach such as Big Bang or going back to your school or college to talk about your degree?
Are you a member of your university mathematics society, are you on the committee and been involved in events?
Do you participate in MathsJam?
Are you a student or e-student member of the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (IMA)?*

- A good understanding of what life as a teacher is really like
 - Recent experience of a secondary school, including observing a lessons, ideally in the subject area you wish to teach.
 - Ability to analyse the teaching you have observed and describe what you have gained from the experience.
 - Understanding of what life as a teacher is really like
 - Understanding of the skills needed to be a teacher and work with young people

What the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications says:

Mathematics is a subject a lot of people find difficult and hard to relate to their lives. As a mathematics teacher you need to be able to make learning fun for all your students. You need to keep struggling students engaged until they have gained understanding and keep strong students stretched and challenged. You need to be able to address the 'what's the point' questions, to be able to motivate your students to put in the effort that a challenging subject demands to reap the rewards of success.

Achievement in mathematics is fundamental to virtually all careers so you have a responsibility to all your students to ensure they achieve as much as they possibly can in your subject.

- Appropriate personal qualities and values, for example:
 - Ability to work and interact with others
 - Ability to think on your feet
 - Good communication skills

What the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications says:

Mathematics is particularly prone to being regarded as dry and difficult. You will need to be able to keep it fun and enjoyable for all your students whatever their previous experiences and levels of achievement.

A five-paragraph suggested structure

1. Why teaching and why you?
2. Relevance of and reflections upon your school-based work experience
3. Why your chosen subject?
4. Any additional factors in support of your application
5. Conclusion

Practicalities

Word process your draft personal statement so you can check it for spelling and grammatical errors before copying and pasting it into the ITT application form. You must be concise in describing your potential to be a successful teacher – for a Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) application you have only 47 lines (4,000 characters) in which to persuade the ITT providers to offer you an interview!

The Interview

Each ITT provider will run the interview in slightly different ways, but they will be looking for the same sorts of things as you have described in your personal statement – but in more detail. It's a good idea to print out your personal statement and read it through before your interview, as you are likely to be questioned on specific things that you've written. The ITT provider will also be looking to make a judgement about your subject knowledge – remember, they will be most interested in your knowledge of secondary school maths, *not* degree level maths.

What the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications says:

*Have you coached anyone to help with their GCSE or GCE mathematics?
Have you helped deliver lessons?
What worked well, what would you do differently?
What examples have you come across where your secondary mathematics plays out in real life?*

Finally, remember you are talking to education professionals who are passionate about their field and can tell when a candidate is exaggerating. Be yourself, take your time, and think carefully about what you say.

What the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications says:

Explain what you have done, what went well and what you would do differently if you were doing it again and why. Reflective learning is important in teaching. It is important that you are always looking to do things better. Also that you are happy to learn from others and can take on board feedback so be open about ideas, tips and techniques you got from other people, web resources and those you remember from your own education. It is also really important that you care about your students and their achievements and that you have the highest expectations and aspirations for them all.