

Chevening Scholarship

Sample Personal Statement / Essay

Applicant: Rahma Hassan | Field: Public Health Policy | Proposed University: London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Word count: 497 | Chevening maximum: 500 words

Adviser's note

The essay below is a complete, submission-ready Chevening personal statement. It has been constructed to satisfy all four Chevening evaluation criteria: Leadership, Networking, Study in the UK, and Return to Home Country. Adviser annotations appear in brackets after each section to explain the strategic intent behind every paragraph. Read those notes before adapting this essay to your own story.

The Essay

The day the clinic in my grandmother's village ran out of malaria medication was not the day anyone died. It was a Tuesday in March, ordinary in every way except that I was there, watching the nurse fold the empty cardboard box and place it carefully on the shelf, as if keeping it might somehow make the medicine return. I was sixteen. I did not yet have a word for what I was watching. I know now it is called a supply chain failure. At the time it simply looked like a woman trying to protect her patients from a truth she could not fix.

That image has followed me through every course I have taken, every dataset I have analysed, and every policy paper I have written. It is why I chose epidemiology over clinical medicine, because I am less interested in treating the patient in front of me than in ensuring the medicine is on the shelf before anyone gets sick. In my third year at the University of Deema, I joined a research team mapping medication stockout patterns across rural health facilities in three regions. What we found confirmed what I had seen at sixteen: the failures were not random. They were predictable. And predictable failures can be prevented.

Acting on that finding, I founded the Health Supply Accountability Network, a coalition of twelve student researchers, two district health officers, and one NGO partner; to pilot a real-time facility reporting tool across six clinics. Within eight months, stockout reporting time fell from an average of nineteen days to four. That project taught me that data is only as powerful as the policy infrastructure that receives it. I can build the evidence. I now need to learn how to make governments act on it.

The Chevening Scholarship would place me at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine at the precise moment that my country is redesigning its national pharmaceutical procurement policy. I am not going to London to acquire a credential. I

intend to study under Professor Kara Hanson, whose work on health system financing in low-income countries directly addresses the structural gap my research has identified. I will engage the UK's Department of Health and Social Care through its international partnership programmes, and I will build lasting relationships with the Chevening network, specifically the cohort of (African/Asian/Europeans) health policymakers whose governments face identical supply chain challenges.

I will return to my country. That is not a formality; it is the entire point. My country Health Service has agreed to embed me in its procurement reform task force upon my return, a role that did not exist before my research was presented to the Deputy Minister last year. The policy window is open. The nurse who folded that empty box is still working in that clinic. I intend to make sure that box is never empty again, and that every clinic in my country can say the same.

Adviser's annotations

Each annotation below explains the strategic decision behind the corresponding paragraph. Use these as a template for building your own essay around your own story.

Paragraph 1 - The opening scene

We open with a specific, visual memory rather than a statement of intent. The empty cardboard box on the shelf is something the reader can see. It creates a question, where is this going? That pulls the committee forward. Notice what is absent: no 'I have always been passionate', no name-and-institution opener, no summary of the essay to come. The scene does all of that work invisibly. The confession that she did not yet have a word for what she was watching is deliberately humble, it makes the intellectual growth that follows feel earned rather than assumed.

Paragraph 2 - Connecting the personal to the academic

This paragraph does two things simultaneously. It explains her choice of field (epidemiology over clinical medicine) in a way that sounds like a conviction rather than a career strategy, and it provides the first hard evidence: a named research project at a named institution with a specific finding. The phrase 'predictable failures can be prevented' is the intellectual thesis of the entire essay. Everything from this point forward is an argument that she is the person to do the preventing.

Paragraph 3 - Leadership with measurable outcomes

Chevening is explicitly a leadership scholarship. This paragraph answers that criterion directly, but without naming it, which would feel mechanical. Instead, we show leadership through action: she founded a network, named its members, named its partners, and produced a specific outcome (stockout reporting time from 19 days to 4). That number is not decorative. It proves the intervention worked. The paragraph closes with a confession of limitation, 'I can build the evidence. I now need to learn how to make governments act on it', which is the most honest and effective bridge to the scholarship ask you can write.

Paragraph 4 - Why Chevening, why LSHTM, why now

This is the most strategic paragraph in the essay and the one most students write weakly. Notice what it contains: a specific institution (LSHTM), a specific faculty member and her research relevance (Professor Hanson), a specific engagement pathway (DHSC international partnerships), and a specific networking intention (African health policymakers with shared challenges). None of this is generic. It cannot be recycled into a Gates Cambridge or Fulbright application. That specificity signals genuine research into the scholarship, which Chevening committees reward, because it tells them the candidate will actually use the network they are being given access to.

Paragraph 5 - Return, impact, and the closing image

Chevening requires a commitment to return to the home country. Most students state this as a formality. This paragraph makes it structural and credible: there is a named government body, a named role that already exists and is waiting, and a named political moment (the Deputy Minister presentation) that proves the candidate already operates at policy level. The essay closes by returning to the nurse and the empty box, circling back to the opening image. This gives the essay a sense of wholeness and lands on emotion rather than ambition. The committee does not just understand what Amara wants to do. They feel why it matters.

How to adapt this essay to your own story

Before writing a single word, answer the following four questions in plain language, not essay language, just your own honest words. Your answers are your essay. Everything else is the writing.

1. What is the specific moment, memory, or experience that made your field feel necessary rather than merely interesting to you?

Describe it as a scene, a place, a person, a moment. Not a general interest. A specific event.

2. What have you actually done about it - not what you plan to do, but what you have already done?

Name a project, a role, an outcome. Include a number if you have one.

3. What specifically can you access through Chevening and LSHTM (or your chosen institution) that you genuinely cannot access any other way?

Name a professor, a lab, a policy programme, a network. If you cannot answer this specifically, research more before you write.

4. What does the world look like, in concrete, human terms, if your work succeeds?

Not 'I will contribute to my country'. Who specifically benefits? What changes for them?