

Statement of Purpose Guidelines

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General Guidelines

1) Before you start writing, be clear in your own mind as to the objectives of writing this statement

A statement of purpose is generally used to convince the admissions committee that you are suitable for the course applied for. Clarify why you think you are suitable for this course, why you would do well in it, and how your previous experiences are relevant and strengthen your position as an applicant. You should also consider your own skills, your strengths and weakness, your motivations and your future plans.

Always keep in mind the purpose of the statement of purpose while writing it, making sure that no superfluous information is included. Remember that while you may wish to reinforce certain parts of your CV, overdoing on repetition is not going to be very useful.

Also keep in mind your readers and consider what they are looking for and how you think you fit in.

2) Draft a Table of Content for your Statement

Consolidate your thoughts into specific sub-topics. The following are typical areas that need to be addressed:

- Your motivations behind your application
- Your reasons for choosing the course that you've chosen
- How you think you are prepared for undertaking the course (you can mention here not only academic preparations, but also any extracurricular activities that have given you skills and knowledge that will be useful for the course)
- Your reasons for choosing the institution
- What are your plans after your study and how does doing this course fit in these plans

If there are any inconsistencies in your records or examination results, you may write a couple of lines to justify yourself. Remember to follow up any potentially negative points with positive statements of your abilities and strengths.

3) Write the Statement in a Style that Reflects your own Character and Personality, but Don't Exaggerate on Individuality

- Avoid narrative styles about your life and avoid confusing sentences
- Try to be clear and to the point in simple language
- Remain objective and specific, but reveal enough relevant information
- Support any statements with real examples (e.g. don't just say that you are good at something, but explain how so and how it's been proven)

4) Things to Consider

- Keep your statement of purpose short (1-2 pages) except if you are writing a research proposal for MPhil or PhD where you may go up to 4-5 pages.
- Do not use jargon or foreign words, unless they are clearly explained
- Spell-check your document or have it proof read

Research Statement of Purpose

5) Objectives

For research applicants, a statement of purpose is an opportunity for the applicant to convince the admissions committee that he/she is serious and has a clear vision for the next few years. It should not only cover the general points in Sections 1-4 above, but also research-related points.

6) Important Points to Cover

- Your research interests: this enables the admissions committee to direct you to the right supervisors
- Your previous research experiences if any, particularly if it is relevant to your expressed research interests above
- Your reasons for doing a research degree
- Why you think you will be successful in doing a research degree – what are your strengths and weaknesses, what prepared you for research
- Reasons for choosing the institution

Consider also the difficulties and challenges of moving area/country and how you are prepared for them.

7) Skills Relevant to Research Students

Research degrees are very different to taught degrees and the amount of contact time with lecturers and supervisors is generally less than in research. The following attributes are useful; if you feel that you have them, it might be helpful to point it out in your statement of purpose:

- Independence and ability to work from your own initiative
- Ability to overcome problems using your own initiative
- Short term and long term planning and organizing skills
- Innovative approach to problem solving
- Ability to define clear objectives and methodology for reaching them
- An understanding of research, research problems and implications
- Perseverance and fighting spirit (does not easily give up)
- Motivated

8) General Format of an SOP for Research

An SOP can be broadly divided into 5 sections based on what were mentioned above.

In the first section, describe the general areas of research that interest you and why. In the second section, describe your previous research experiences, what you found, what you learned, what were your approaches. The third section can cover the research project that you want to work on. Mention any papers have you looked at for research in the area you are looking for to illustrate that you are knowledgeable in the chosen field. In the fourth section, describe why you feel you need a M.S/MPhil/Ph.D. Look back to sections 2 and 3 and explain what are



in there that appealed to you. In the final section, describe why you want to join the university you are applying, whom might you like to work with, what will you will you get out of this university and how this university can help you in achieving your goals.

It's important to realise that the research statement is not a commitment to do research in that area. A third of all applicants end up working in an area different from that which they described on their research statement.