

Letter/Statement of Intent

WHAT IS IT?

- Intellectual autobiography that conveys the continuum of experiences and events in your academic life which have led you to desire an academic graduate education.
- What you did academically, why and with whom,
- What you want to do academically, where, why, and with whom

BEFORE YOU WRITE

- DO YOUR HOMEWORK
- Get the school's catalogue
- Confirm that the degree program offered matches your career goals
- Review the courses offered by the school that pertain to your goals
- Get the names of specific faculty members with whom you want to study
- Ask your current teachers if they know any of the faculty members in the proposed graduate program.

OPENING PARAGRAPH

- State the program to which you are making application,
- Whether you are seeking a master's or doctorate,
- Why you are applying to the program.
- Begin in a direct manner
- Avoid talking about personal, extracurricular or family background.

SUBSEQUENT PARAGRAPHS—Your Qualifications and Background

Describe

- Experiences that have served as a foundation for your future graduate work,
- How your interest in the field developed,
- How you planned academically for your goal.

Discuss

- Undergraduate studies, in general,
- Your major and any specialization within the major, in specific terms.

Weave into the letter

- Any academic achievements or accomplishments
- Specific learning experiences that demonstrate your motivation and inspiration for continued study and/or research.
 - a. independent study courses or research with professors
 - b. teaching assistantships
 - c. undergraduate research conference presentations
 - d. published work
 - e. laboratory experiences
 - f. research internships
 - g. seminar courses
 - h. honors thesis
 - i. relevant education abroad
 - j. independent writing
 - k. academic honors and/or very closely related work experience.

Discuss in detail:

- Qualifications that relate to your academic goal
- Special academic and research experiences.

Explain special projects or research

- Indicate ability to explore or master certain skills or particular knowledge about your academic field
- Illustrate to the committee that you have
 - a. the initiative and ability to develop ideas
 - b. the capacity to work through problems independently
 - c. the determination to achieve your goals

Mention special skills

- laboratory techniques
- computer skills
- foreign language proficiency
- advanced quantitative and statistical expertise.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: Planned Academic Future—Explain

- Why you wish to attend this particular program.
- How this department's graduate curriculum matches your short and long term academic and career goals.
- Evidence of your investigation of their program, its faculty and their research, and their departmental resources and facilities.
- How your academic and intellectual interests form a match with the research interests of one or more faculty in the program or department.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Tell the Graduate Committee

- That you are qualified and motivated
- That you will be successful in graduate study and research
- Why you believe you possess the experience and skills to be admitted to their program

STYLE OF LETTER:

- direct and straightforward manner
- **no** contrivances or gimmicks
- place central points early
- use active, not passive voice
- **do not use words** such as rather, quite, somewhat, fairly, pretty much
- Be positive
 - a. emphasize strengths
 - b. explain anomalies
- Be accurate and precise

EDIT RUTHLESSLY

- CUT OUT redundancy
- Be organized, orderly, specific and concise.
- Use examples where needed
- keep the statement to one or two typed pages.
- Use transitions that tie each paragraph to the next.