

Statement of Purpose Guidelines

Your statement of purpose should focus on the reasons you are interested in attending a specific graduate program. The statement should be well organized, concise, and completely free of grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. Before submitting the statement, seek constructive comments and criticism from friends and advisors.

Five primary topics to cover in your statement of purpose:

1. **How did you become interested in this field?** Establish that you have had an interest in the field and that you have taken positive steps in pursuing your interest. Give the committee members a sense of your particular talents and abilities and their relevance to your academic interests.
2. **What experiences have contributed toward your preparation for further study in this field?** Demonstrate your interest by providing examples of research experiences, internships, work experiences, community service, publications, or life experiences. Briefly describe what you did in each experience. Also, make sure to articulate what you have learned about the field and how those lessons stimulated you to pursue advanced study.
3. **What are your future goals?** Specifically state your degree objective (Master's or Ph.D.) and specify what subdisciplines you are interested in pursuing. For example, if you are applying in psychology, the committee needs to know whether you are pursuing clinical, counseling, cognitive, developmental, or another subdiscipline. Let the reader know that you are planning a future career as a university professor, researcher, or consultant, or in public service or private practice (or whatever your goal may be).
4. **What are your research interests?** Within your subdiscipline, you should be able to identify one or two topics that are of interest to you. When possible, be specific about your research agenda. (You will usually not be expected to know exactly what you want to research; faculty know that initial interests often change.)
5. **How are you a "match" for the program to which you are applying?** Explain what attracts you most to the institution/program to which you are applying. If an individual faculty member's research aligns with your interest, indicate this in your statement.

Finally, consider incorporating the following:

- Examples of personal attributes or qualities that would help you complete graduate study successfully.
- Your readiness for advanced academic work and your belief that you will be successful in graduate school.
- Your initiative and ability to develop ideas, your ability to work independently, and your determination to achieve your goals.

Highlighting Your Contributions to Diversity at UC

All the UC campuses are interested in students with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and interests. Each campus has an area on the application designed to highlight your unique experiences. This may be found in a separate "Personal History" essay, or may be folded into the main application essay, or they may be found in the financial aid section of the application. In this area, you will want to discuss:

- Your potential to bring to your research the critical perspective that comes from a non-traditional educational background or experience as a member of a group historically under-represented in higher education;
- Examples of your drive and motivation to persist and succeed despite any economic, social or educational barriers you may have encountered;
- Examples of your communication skills and cross-cultural abilities;
- Any research interests in subjects that will contribute to diversity and equal opportunity in higher education; and/or
- Your potential to contribute to your research or graduate program through your understanding of the barriers groups underrepresented in higher education.