

## LETTER/STATEMENT OF INTENT:

### ACADEMIC MASTER'S and Ph.D. PROGRAMS

#### 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.

#### How is it organized?

##### OPENING PARAGRAPH

- State the program to which you are making application,
- whether you are seeking a master's or doctorate,
- and in a general sense, 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,
- and how you planned academically for your goal.

##### Discuss

- undergraduate studies, in general,
- and 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

- indicates ability to explore or master certain skills or particular knowledge about your academic field
- illustrates 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

- specifically why you wish to attend their particular program.
- specifically how the department's graduate curriculum matches your short and long term academic and career goals.

- show evidence of your investigation of their program, its faculty and their research, and their departmental resources and facilities
- indicate 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

Summarize briefly

- 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.
- Do not assume that the committee will understand everything.
  - a. Explain course titles and research projects where necessary

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