



# PERSONAL STATEMENT - LETTER OF INTENT

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Not sure what makes a good personal statement or letter of intent? The following will provide some general points to help guide this important component of your application process.

We encourage you to look at each program you are applying to for their specific guidelines and suggestions as well.

## FIRST, WHAT DID THEY ASK FOR?

- Be clear if you are writing a personal statement or a letter of interest/intent
- Follow their prompts and focus your responses

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

### Letter of Intent or Letter of Interests

- Tend to be asked by academic/research focused programs
- It represents your intellectual interest in the program
- Will be focused on the relevant academics & research experiences
- Showcases your good fit with the department and intended research supervisor

### Personal Statements or Responses to questions

- Tend to be asked by programs that are preparing you for a profession or discipline
- It represents your personal insight into abilities, interests, motivations, experiences
- It illustrates your competencies and knowledge of the profession and program
- Showcases your good fit for the program and profession

## GOOD APPLICATIONS ARE:

### Well Researched - Know the program, school, profession and yourself...

- Have a clear understanding of the program
- Know the skills and knowledge needed for the profession or research area
- You'll also need a strong understanding of yourself

### Insightful - Description is not enough...

- Ask yourself questions to get to a level of insight expected.
- What do you want to learn and why?
- Why do I want x program or profession? ... Then ask "why" again

### Credible - Your statements are backed up with evidence...

- Provide examples, evidence, stories
- Think of the 3 R's when considering which stories to use: Relevant, Responsibility level and Recent (as possible)





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**Specific** - Provide details, so they can have a “picture” ...

- Include enough details so the readers get a picture of the situation or experience.
- Don't assume the reader knows

**Precise** - Well articulated and efficient with words...

- Review and fine tune your writing

**Well Written** - It doesn't have to be fancy, just well written....

- Should be well organized, easy to follow and engaging to read.
- Vocabulary, grammar, essay structure, etc.
- Check and double check for grammar and spelling mistakes.

**Personal** - It is about your experience and represents you...

- Give the committee a glimpse into the person you are and/or your interests motivations
- Ask yourself if this could be anyone's statement or is it uniquely yours – based on your perspective, attitudes, viewpoint.

## FINAL TIPS

- Start early. Give yourself ample time to make many revisions.
- Demonstrate your motivation & preparation.
- Target your writing each schools & programs by being clear about what their program offers.
- **Most important** - Is it focused to the program and what they are asking for?

## RESOURCES

Additional Guides and Tips

<http://grad.unm.edu/resources/gs-forms/letter-of-intent.html>

[www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/statement-interest](http://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/statement-interest)

<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/types-of-writing/admission-letters/>

<https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/apessay.html>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/>

[https://www.law.utoronto.ca/documents/JD/UofT\\_Law\\_Personal\\_Statements\\_Examples.pdf](https://www.law.utoronto.ca/documents/JD/UofT_Law_Personal_Statements_Examples.pdf)

Writing Supports

<https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/tools/tips/#fyiWRITING>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/>

Application support is available through the Student Success Centre – appointments available through

[OSCARplus.mcmaster.ca](http://OSCARplus.mcmaster.ca)



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Student Success  
Centre